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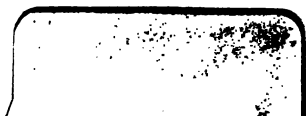
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Showing its worthiness of noble thoughts  
By a clear sense of inward nobleness.

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sense, united to solid judgment and vigorous imagination—while a high cultivation of his intellectual faculties necessarily purified and refined his taste. A strong feeling of humour underlying his more prominent powers, being always allied to good nature, made him a most welcome guest everywhere, so that he gave a charm to every household where he set his foot, for with him a gleam of sunshine seemed to enter. When he was thrown in the way of folks who were disposed to ride the high-horse, to parade themselves either for their position, personal advantages, or natural abilities and intellectual attainments, he had a happy way of conducting himself, which failed not to correct, by his refined humour, any straining at display. Ill-tempered people and sarcastic ones were often provokingly foiled by him; for he never seemed to comprehend the ill-natured thing said, or the bitterness intended. It will hence be apparent that he had, in this general confirmation of his mental and moral structure,

the power and skill to checkmate, in a great degree, the peculiar infirmities and wicked tendencies of people and his fellow-clergyman and brother-in-law, William Rushworth. Thus, to his active tendencies to good affirmative, he acted as a drag and check upon men who were aggressively evil; he being alike negatively and positively virtuous.

To understand fully the following circumstance, it is requisite to state that William Rushworth was not in any sense what is considered a reader, and never had been; his acquaintance with books was sadly if not disgracefully contracted. This was a fact which made Captain Leo estimate him somewhat below his real level. The very large circle of books which had occupied the attention of my mother, and through me, in part, the notice and study of Jessie Wilson and her aunt, who were in reality book-worm, finding for years a solace therein, which compensated for their isolation in the village; and it was in no small degree the


cause of the Vicar's dislike of the whole of us, for when matters purely literary were the subject of conversation, he was unavoidably made to feel that he was below par.

Jessie Wilson very often took sly delight in making him feel that he was "no. where," as folks say on the turf.

Another matter has to be mentioned—namely, the Vicar had been re-inspired with a hope of obtaining the Rectory of Edgecombe, growing out of the death of Lady Elliott, and the imbecile state of mind into which Sir Langton had fallen through excessive grief. He had been several times with him in his clerical capacity, and had availed himself of the circumstance to influence the failing mind of the Baronet to promise him the living. As Sir Langton was a most sincerely religious man, easily influenced on that side of his nature, even during the full strength of his manhood, it is not to be wondered at that he was inclined to listen to the present arguments, appeals, and adulatory


intreaties of the Vicar. The memory of the Baronet had become oblivious of late events and things. In this state, he had told the Vicar that if he would draw up a document promising the living of Edgecombe to himself after the present incumbent was dead, he would sign it. Whether the Baronet really did make this promise is, in some degree, difficult to decide, as it rests only on the word of the person interested. It is certain that the Vicar prepared such a deed in good legal form, and his antecedents enabled him to do this with much ability, in more points than one.

It happened about a week before Christmas, that Captain Leo was more than usually away from his brother, going up and down the village with Jerome Givington, to look into the state of the poor, prospectively to their Christmas dinners; and while this was going forward, the Vicar had made a call upon the Baronet to administer his sympathy and ghostly consolation, and seek the reward of



his works in this life by the substantial good of the Rectory. This was the first point gained. The next day the Vicar suspected, shrewdly enough, that the Captain and Curate would be engaged in their exploration amongst the vulgar of Edgecombe, as he called them. He watched his opportunity, accordingly, and, just as Captain Leo reached the village, he made his way to the Mansion, and found Sir Langton in a state of the most distressing weakness, but in a measure well suited for his purpose. There was, however, one difficulty in the way of accomplishing his purpose. He did not want a witness in that Mansion, while Sir Langton gave his signature; and the Captain's valet, who had been with him some years, and knew how to obey orders, had, in a manner, the charge of the Baronet, and was not disposed to take any slight hint from the Vicar that he had to speak privately to Sir Langton.

After several ineffectual attempts to get rid of the valet, he point blank requested him



to leave the room, as he had some private communication to Sir Langton.

At this he made the most unmistakeable show of submission, and left the room with his best behaviour ; but having had command from the Captain not to lose sight of the Baronet while he was absent, the prudent valet walked round to a private door, which was concealed with a crimson curtain. There he stood, not only in hearing of all which passed, but in such a position as enabled him, from between the heavy folds, to see them both, and know all that was going forward.

Just as the Baronet was on the point of taking the pen to sign the document, the valet quietly stepped into the room again, behind the Vicar, and was at his elbow, and had glanced at the parchment before he was observed.

“Had you not better wait, Sir Langton, until the Captain returns, before you sign this parchment?” said the valet, speaking to the Baronet, but keenly eyeing the Vicar’s parch-

ment, so that he caught a sight of the date of the last year; then scanning the Vicar, added—

“Excuse me, sir, but is it not necessary in all such matters to have a witness?”

The Vicar made a virtue of necessity, acknowledged his oversight, and thanked the valet even for his suggestion, and fell in with the will of Sir Langton, who said—

“It will be best, Mr. Rushworth, that my brother should be an attesting witness.”

“Quite proper—certainly. I wish everything to be done deliberately. Shall I read a part of the service to you, Sir Langton?”

The Vicar of Timberton, and would-be Rector of Edgecombe, doubled up his document as he said this and put it into his pocket, and as the poor nobleman was ‘*sans* everything,’ he acquiesied, and a few minutes after the Vicar was reading prayers for the sick. He knew that the contracting party on one side would forget all about the fact in ten minutes, and he was, in his own estimation,

able to outface the truth and gainsay the valet. He still entertained the hope of accomplishing his purpose, for he did not know that the troublesome valet had observed the date. With this idea strongly pre-occupying his mind he believed that a chance would offer itself, and that in the interval he had better make himself agreeable at the Angle House as a matter of good policy. For this reason he came into the room as bland in look as a gleam of sunshine in December, yet like an unsatisfied tiger in sight of choice prey.

His manner surprised us all, but less so Jerome Givington, who seemed to take it as a matter of course. Neither of us at that time knew anything whatever about this underhanded bye-play of the Vicar. Dame Wilson's mind was too full of painful remembrances to allow her to be at ease, so she took no part in the conversation, but amused herself with a book. Jessie talked in her light, free, off-hand manner about anything and



everything which came uppermost, all the time holding a book in her hand which she read to herself at each interval of her remarks. After several grotesque attempts at a compliment made by the Vicar, he asked, somewhat abruptly—

“What book is that you are idling over, Miss Wilson? You seem to read with attention delightfully divided.”

“Just so, Mr. Rushworth,” Jessie rejoined, quickly, “that is the reason why I am such a novice in the literature of England. Your ability to concentrate your thoughts on one subject—to fiddle on one string, as vulgar people express the quality, gives you great pre-eminence. Pray, sir, did you every read the five new revelations made to Mister Joe Smith by the fifth-born—that is created Angel of the Infinite called Mormon? It’s a strange affair, sir, let me tell you—quite a novel phase in the development of christianity and man’s nature.”

“I suppose some of your particular friends

have become Joe Smithites, or Mormons," said the Vicar. "Such a result is the legitimate end of dissent."

"Oh, to be sure!" added Jessie; "the legitimate consequences of dissent are so many, and all of them so bad, that I am inclined to become a Catholic and escape all the evils of Protestantism—and its great good likewise! When do you think of returning into the bosom—the pale of the true church—out of which there is no salubrious sanctification? Shall I read a few pages of this book for your delectation, sir? Are you afraid of having the sublime purity of your saving faith made turbid by Joe Smith's Mormon monomania, Mr. Jerome Givington? The Vicar, I am sure, is too well grounded in his belief to be shaken by a revelation which comes to the world through a smith. The difference between a smith and a carpenter is, of course, infinite. Shall I read for your mutual edification, gentlemen?"

A sort of dry cackle or hacking cough, or

both combined, broke from the Vicar of Timberton, while a joyous, exhilarating laugh burst from the Curate of Edgecombe. Knowing that Jessie held in her hand Macpherson's Poems of Ossian, I said—

“Let us have a page or two, by all means, that we may be able to form an independent opinion about the matter.”

“By all means, let the Smith have a hearing,” observed the Curate.

“Let Joseph Smith, Mormon, Esquire, have a fair hearing by all means,” replied the Vicar. “Every dog has his day.”

“Very true,” dryly added Dame Wilson. “Is Joe Smith's faith anything like Johanna Southcott's?”

“I suspect not,” answered my mother. Jessie, having satisfied herself, began with much apparent solemnity, at Dar—Thula, here and there substituting Jewish names of places and persons, and changing the tense of the verbs with great facility.

“The daughters of Mormon are fair; they

are the daughters of heaven; the silence of their faces is pleasant.

“They come forth in their loveliness.

“The stars attend their blue course from the east to the west.

“The clouds rejoice in their presence, O Mormon.

“They brighten the New Jerusalem.

“Who is like them in heaven?

“They are lights of the silent night, the stars are ashamed in their presence—they turn away their sparkling eyes when the daughters of Mormon go to rejoice in his mansion of truth in the New Jerusalem.

“Harken, thou favoured of thy kindred, and know henceforth thy common name, Smith, shall be had in honour; for the stars shall lift up their head.

“They who were ashamed in his presence shall rejoice, for I will clothe them with thy brightness, like the sun looking from the gates of the sky.”

“Ah, ah—a-ah,” chuckled the Vicar,—

“that’s rum stuff, and no mistake; regular obsolete jargon; but it is that sort of extravagant rant which takes hold of vulgar minds. The common name—common enough—of Smith shall be had in honour. Was this Mormon Smith of yours, Miss Wilson, a locksmith, a whitesmith, a blacksmith, or all in one, a jobbing-smith?”

“He seems to have had some fine poetical qualities of mind,” quietly observed Jerome Givington.

“Just so,” I said, “according to the opinion of some modern critic; the strength of imagination—”

“There’s no imagination required to write in that style of stilted, oriental personification. Joe Smith has only copied—imitated, I may say—and that very badly the manner of Solomon’s songs. I see clearly enough that he has been uniting Solomon’s songs, and the Revelations in his blasphemous impudence, and, with some of his own Smithite vulgarities, made up a book to entrap vulgar and

weak-minded people. I know how Joe Smith has managed Mr. Mormon, for I have read an article or two lately about this Book of Mormon."

Inspired by the sound of his own voice and the profundity of his literary knowledge, the Vicar added—

"I suppose you have a fine chapter about polygamy — founded upon the kingly and typical state of Solomon, to justify the infamous practices of these Latter Day Saints. Let us hear what Mr. Smith Mormon says on the subject, Miss Wilson, if he knows how to write decently."

"Decently!" repeated Jessie; "there is no kind of indecency in the Mormon Bible—very far from it. In that respect it has a claim to superiority, neither is there anything especially new written about polygamy. The Mormons found their practice of that sort of wickedness not upon what their prophet Smith taught and practiced, but upon those of the old patriarchs and your typical Solo-

mon. Will you hear a bit more of this singular book ?”

My mother was laughing in her sleeve, nay, more, was obliged to take up her sceptre of household authority, and bang the yule-block about to hide her merriment. Dame Wilson was too deeply absorbed in admiration of her niece to be light-hearted.

Jerome Givington rubbed his hands together, as if they were cold, and walked to the window and back, full of inward animation and admiration of the self-possession and tact of Jessie. My sisters were conversing about their children on one side, while I was endeavouring to catch every look and word which passed.

“Oh, yes ; let us have a little more of your singular book, the Arabian Nights is nothing to Joe Mormon.”

Jessie turned over a page or two of Ossian, and continued as before—

“And Uriel said to his valiant men-of-war, whose spears were in their hands, and their

swords with two edges girt about their sides, come, for Mormon is our chief; let our battle be on the coast, for the white bosomed maid of the new city of Salem.

“His people are not with Nathos, they are behind the rolling sea, nigh to Joppa.

“Thou didst fly from him in battle when his friends were round his spear.

“Thy fathers, Oh Smith, hereafter to be honoured, were not amongst the renowned, nor of the kings of men; but thy posterity shall rule nations, and give laws to new worlds, and live and reign for three thousand three hundred and thirty and three years in the New Jerusalem. Harken! oh, Smith—for Mormon hath spoken it—Amen.”

Jessie closed the book in part, keeping her finger between the leaves, and, looking first at the Curate then at the Vicar, said—

“I suppose I need not read any more of this book, as you learned divines are doubtless well acquainted with the authenticated falsehoods of Mormon, and have no faith in a Smith,



whatever you may have in a carpenter's son's cross—when bedaubed or gilded with devil's dust. I read all that I meet with about the Mormons, for I think the Latter Day Saints are quite as respectable as the saints of old, and wear better breeches and petticoats."

A general laugh followed this sally, while a clattering and cheerful sound of the tea things, blended with the merriment, made even the dignified air of Dame Wilson a little grotesque. The Curate said—

"I do not see any grounds to oppose Mormonism, because the name of the man who professed that he had the so-called revelation of Mormon happened to be Smith."

The Vicar said—

"I differ from you in that point—the very common, therefore, in the proper sense, vulgar, name of Smith makes these Latter Day Saints contemptible, notwithstanding the superiority of fashionable breeches and petticoats of which Miss Wilson seems so proud."

"I think you are speaking unreflectingly," said the Curate.

"Not a bit of it," added the Vicar. "I hate the vulgar names of Smith, Brown, and Jones."

"Perhaps it's the hate you have to the name, and not the commonness of it, that offends your moral sensibility," gaily observed Jessie, shaking her stiff silk dress, as she moved towards the piano.

Jerome Givington was always earnest when a fact was questioned or a false view was taken of a subject, so he returned to the point.

"A name cannot be either good or bad in the abstract, but it may be either the one or the other by virtue of its association with human qualities. It's commonness cannot be an objection to the qualities of any particular individual who bears the name. The name of Jesus has become justly hallowed to christians, but it was as common amongst the Jews in the days of Pontius Pilate as Smith is

in these of George the Fourth. I fear there is too much truth in what this fair apologist insinuates about the devil's dust—for gold will beautify a dunghill, as well as the accursed and infamous cross if the right of appropriation thereof is allowed to gratify our interest. That golden cross, looking at all London from the dome of St. Paul's was originally synonymous with that life-destroying instrument too frequently hung out of Newgate and other gaols—we call it the gallows. This is too often overlooked."

"Oh, to be sure," retorted the Vicar, a little changing the subject, feeling himself in a fix. "Oh! to be sure, I see you are opposed to capital punishment. Perhaps you would treat criminals with more consideration than paupers?"

"By no means—I would neither treat criminals like paupers nor paupers like criminals, but this has nothing to do with Joe Smith and the singular book from which we have heard a few sentences. Read us a little

more, Miss Wilson, of your compound of Solomon's songs and the Revelation."

"I think she ought to inform us first how she came in possession of such a dangerous and infamous book; I am surprised that her—her aunt, should allow her to read such soul destroying falsehoods; I am sorry, truly sorry, that the book of Mormon should have been brought into this village; I should like to put the scandalous work into the fire, and see the person who brought the book to Timber-ton put into the stocks."

The Vicar, warmed with his own eloquence and moved by his own animus, was about to proceed, when Jessie said—

"How easy it is for the heathen to rage and the people to imagine a vain thing. It is no use reading any more, so I will let well alone; you have no faith, none of the simplicity of children to receive with meekness the words of Mormon. I might read and preach to you until I am as thin and shadowy as a

ghost of Ossian without converting such stiff-necked officers of the Church militant."

"The vile sect of which you are the advocate, Miss Wilson," said the Vicar, "ought to be crushed by the strong arm of the law. Harry Neville, who—"

"My Mormon readings came from another quarter, so your assumption has no foundation. I have a liking for out-of-the-way sort of books, such as Mahomet's Koran, Zoroaster's Zandavesta, and the Veds and Vedant of the Hindoos—Plato's Phædo, and Sindbad the Sailor. No doubt it's a depraved taste, but I have actually read all the wicked plays of one William Shakespere, who was a deer-stealer, and last week I got hold of Ossian's poems, and now—"

"Your erratic passions are seeking vicious sport from the blasphemous work of Joe Smith; fie upon you, Miss Wilson. You had better read—"

"Read what?" asked Jessie, so sharply that we were all a little startled.

We were moving about to cluster round the tea-table, in doing which, Jessie had thoughtlessly laid down the supposed Mormon Bible, and the Vicar had just taken it up; of course he found that he had been "smoked" a little by his ignorance of Ossian, and had taken Jessie's readings as genuine Mormonism. If he had quietly put the book down again, nobody would have observed the fact but myself, but he felt provoked at having his literary knowledge 'quizzed' by a young girl, whom he, in his heart, very much despised, if he did not hate her. Instead of this, he dashed Ossian down with such violence, that it upset a glass vase, and broke it on the sideboard, so that the attention of all present was called to the fact. As the vase had a little winter nosegay in it, the water was running on the table, wetting the leaves of Ossian, when Jessie took it up, and said—

"This is the dear old Captain's book. I am sorry you have baptized it by immersion, Mr. Rushworth."

He replied—

“If you were served the same, it would not be much matter.”

“Very likely, but the difference would be just this—I should be a baptist dissenter, instead of a true Churchwoman. I am half afraid the good Captain won’t lend me any more books, now this has met with such rough treatment. He promised to lend me on New Year’s day, his rare copy of “The History of the Defunct Faiths and Primæval Divinities,” by Zuiliglius Ulrie Kozzonifki. It is very unfortunate, certainly. I feel just as if I wanted to cry.”

My mother and her dignified friend looked at Jessie with considerable anxiety, for the tone of her voice indicated that she meant what she said. We commenced tea in silence; Jerome Givington looked thoughtful and meditative—his wife looked at him lovingly. The Vicar’s passions darkened his cold and icy eyes and furrowed his brows—his wife, endeavoured to look at him without being

observed with a face full of anxiety—Dame Wilson sipped her tea with a calm expression and a dignified mien, while Jessie looked really as vibrating between a laugh and a cry—a smile and a tear—when a loud and hasty knocking at the front door announced some extraordinary matter. It was the head groom from the Mansion bringing a note from Captain Leo to me; the first great fact which it stated was anticipated by the verbal announcement of the groom to Jane, who entered the sitting-room with the note, and exclaimed, in breathless surprise—

“Please, ma’am, the groom is come with this letter to Mr. Neville, and he says poor Sir Langton Elliott is just dead; he died in Captain Leo’s arms!”

The words of Jane fell like a thunderbolt in the midst of us, and in the tumult caused by the news, I heard William Rushworth grate his teeth gnashingly, and in a jerking voice, low but fierce, curse somebody or something.



The short letter was as follows :

“My dear Harry—

“My dear brother has just breathed his last in peace in my arms. I want to see you, if you can come down. Bring with you Jerome Givington, as I wish to see him. I am sure that your good mother will be filled with sorrow, and sympathise with me in this great affliction.

“Yours faithfully,

“LEO ELLIOTT.”

When I had read the letter, I handed it to Jerome, who read and gave it to my mother without comment. The moment my mother folded it up and placed it on the table beside her without reading it aloud or giving it to the Vicar, he rose up suddenly, and said—

“It is clear enough to me that you have personal interests, secrets, and schemes which you deem desirable to conceal from me, so that the sooner I am away from this house the

better will be your opportunity to mature your plans. You had better put on your cloak and bonnet, Mrs. Rushworth, and go with me to the Vicarage."

"We have no schemes to conceal, nor plans to mature," said my mother emphatically; "you should not indulge in such hasty suspicions, continually assigning to others as facts things which have no existence but in your own imagination. Poor, kind hearted, man—I hope, I believe he is gone to a better world."

"Ah—ah—it does not much matter what you think about that matter, it's all up with him; no doubt he would have shown himself a far better man if it had not been for that free-thinking misbeliever who has corrupted the simple faith of more persons than his own family; I presume the old sea-hulk of a Captain is become Sir Leo — forsooth! I think you are suddenly become deaf, Mrs. Rushworth, I think we had better hasten to the Vicarage, my dear!"

My sister rose in silence, and made ready to do what her husband commanded. While she was doing so, attended by my mother and sister, I talked to Jessie about Sir Langton, whilst her aunt was addressing her conversation to Jerome Givington, which left the Vicar to his own reflections. If he had suspected for one moment that we were sent for to the Mansion, he would not on any account have gone home but would have abused us beyond measure at our going away after he had been invited. No circumstance would have in his opinion, justified our acceding to the Captain's desire.

In talking about Sir Langton's death, that of his age was a natural subject of remark, and Dame Wilson, perfectly innocent of any ulterior aim, said —

“Considering the great age of the Rector of Edgcombe, we must expect soon to see him follow the Baronet and his Lady.”

“Yes,” added Jessie, “and if I were the owner of the advowson, I would give it to you,

Mr. Givington, with all my heart's best benediction. I mean to tell the Captain the next time I see him, that he cannot do me a greater favour than presenting the Rectory of Edgecombe to the present Curate."

She pouted up her lips with a kind of conscious triumph, which seemed to set the contemptuous feeling of the Vicar at defiance. The Vicar rejoined—

"I dare say if you were a fine lady you would do very fine things, but being only a vain one, why you will act accordingly: no doubt the old grizzle-headed Captain will be ready at a moment's notice to grant you or any other girl any favour—that sort of thing is quite in his line; he has been making presents of a mess of gewgaw trumpery jewellery to that other village noodle, shepherd Wimbush's silly girl, Eliza; he ought to know better than to be everlastingly chattering his rubbish into the ears of every foolish girl in the village, and filling the minds of humbly-born people with notions of gentility. It's disgraceful in him,

and will recoil on his own head some of these days—I should not be surprised if his son, Mr. Willifer Elliott, disgraced himself by marrying some one of the young girls of Timberton or Edgecombe whom his father's folly had corrupted. I, as Vicar of this place, do not hesitate to tell your—your—aunt, Dame Wilson, that I consider it a burning shame, an offence against morality and religion, to allow you to indulge in such abominable freedom with an old sea Captain.”

During these remarks Jerome Givington looked at his brother clergyman, perfectly astonished to hear him speak in such a fashion and show such unchristian animus. Jerome Givington could have suffered death easier than he could have been guilty of such abominable conduct. In one sense it was fortunate that he made not the slightest comment, and, as I knew the man too well, I said nothing, for I wanted him to depart that we might go forthwith to the Mansion.

Jessie was about to reply, for her eyes gave

out those bright flashes of calm indignation which at once showed her strength and spirit, but as her aunt rose from her chair she yielded to the wisdom and experience of one, who, was better qualified to rebuke and castigate the reverend delinquent.

“The last time I met you in this house, your infamous behaviour prompted me to tell you only—that you are a fool!—now your insolence is insufferable, and I am constrained to tell you plainly that you are a rascal and—”

“And what, madam,—what will your impudence and conceit prompt you to say next? and what, madam,” the Vicar articulated, loudly and fiercely. She firmly and calmly continued—

“I say you are a rascal and a rogue—”


“I’ll bring you before your betters, madam; I’ll make you prove your words, or eat them, you upstart,” retorted William Rushworth with increased fierceness.

Dame Wilson, as before, calmly went on—

"I am in the presence of your betters now, and know you and yours, better than you suspect."

"Who are you, forsooth?" inquired he. He knew Dame Wilson only as shopkeeper of Timberton.

"I am one who never had the necessity to eat my own words, and one who can any hour prove that you are a rogne and a felon, you have committed a far worse offence against the laws than that for which Dr. Dodd, a better man than you, was hanged. That's who I am; and I know your father was a liar, a thief, a felon, and a forgerer, and committed *felo de se* to save the country the expense of a rope. You talk to me about 'burning shame, offence against morality and religion;' why, you are covered with the foul spots of moral leprosy; you contemptible wretch. Your insinuations against the character of my niece ought to choke your breath as the Vicar of this place, and would have closed your lips, if you had remembered your



own villanous youth and your early manhood. Ah, I see you begin to know who I am; you suspect you have seen a man, and a gentleman whom I resemble. Yes, yes, that's it, William Rushworth—you remember his signature well enough, don't you? Oh, yes, too well. How very cleverly you imitated the great D. and little G. with its double turns. You know who I am now—Dame Wilson, shopkeeper, up-start, pomp, and vanity, not mother, but aunt of Jessie Wilson. If you are not satisfied who I am, or would like to see some of your early specimens of penmanship, I can gratify you any hour at the shop down yonder."

At this moment, my mother and sisters returned. The Vicar's wife was ready to go. They departed, and three minutes afterwards I and Jerome Givington were on our way to the Mansion.




## CHAPTER II.

## BLACK CLOAK AND WHITE-HOODED MOURNER.

SINCE Sir Langton Elliott breathed his last on Christmas evening, one month had passed away, during which brief space several events had transpired considerably influencing my prospects. Sir Langton was placed in his last resting abode a fortnight after his death, being followed by all his tenantry and many of the gentry and nobility of the neighbourhood, for he was a gentleman highly esteemed.

All the estates and most of the personal



property, which were great, came to the possession of Captain Leo, together with the family title, so that added to his own property, he was one of the richest Baronets in the kingdom. Sir Langton had left two thousand pounds to my mother, a legacy which was altogether unexpected, and it formed a part of the original will made ten years before his death. The consideration intimated to me as the will of Sir Langton was lost through the mental derangement caused by his grief, which rendered him incapable of responsible action until the day of his death. It was to this circumstance that William Rushworth eagerly looked as the means of securing for himself the rectory of Edgecombe, by obtaining the signature of the Baronet surreptitiously to an ante-dated document promising that or an equivalent; and this the good sense of the Captain's valet defeated.

Another matter turned up, though not altogether unexpectedly, for a letter reached

Dame Wilson from Jamaica, through the firm of Wells and Trueman, which informed her that her only brother, whom she believed was dead, was still in the land of the living.

The letter informed her that he had been in some respects a successful man, having saved himself twenty thousand pounds by trade, which he wished to spend for the good of his sister and his sister's children, if she had married and had a family. He wanted at first to know if his sisters were alive, in which case he intended to return to England to live with them; but if they had been both dead he had no inducement to return, yet he intended to leave his property to all his next of kin. This was a matter of much rejoicing to the people of the village shop, not so much for the twenty thousand pounds which had been accumulated, as in the prospect of seeing a beloved brother and uncle, who had been considered dead for nearly twenty years. "My brother Ben, and your uncle Benjamin," had been a form of speaking with Dame Wilson to

Jessie from the earliest dawn of memory in the latter, and a kind of sanctity had grown about the ideal image which had taken possession of their minds, so that he was now talked about as one coming from the land of the blessed.

As Dame Wilson had also managed with thrifty prudence to save a considerable sum of money, sufficient to enable herself and niece to live in comfortable independence, they began to talk of retiring from the care of business; and as Jessie was the only slip of humanity in the second degree, the prospect of a happy future looked cheerful.

Uncle Ben assured them that he should have all his affairs arranged in three months, when he should set sail forthwith for his native land.

Another matter gave me in particular more satisfaction than I would willingly have acknowledged to the dear woman of my heart. It was this :—The regiment in which Mr. Willifer Elliott was Ensign, was ordered to India immediately, so that before Sir Langton

was buried it was on its way to Calcutta—the Ensign being promoted to the rank of Captain. It was this event which made the fair flirting girl, Eliza, a disappointed visitor on Christmas-eve at B——.

His father was too much of an Englishman to allow any trifling sentimentality to interfere with a public duty in the Service on land or sea. For this reason he insisted that his son should not leave the regiment even for a day to take leave of friends at Timberton; nor would it have been wise for him to have done so at that moment of his gratuitous promotion, which was the beginning of a noble career. He wrote a most affectionate and gentlemanly letter to Jessie Wilson, assuring her of his devotion and lasting affection, in which he distinctly promised to marry her if she kept herself single until his return. He also informed her that he had acquainted his father of the same fact. I confess that I could not very well conceal my sense of joyous satisfaction. With the officer's departure all

hope of ever achieving an alliance between him and Amy Rushworth, left the Vicarage, so that an extra quantity of gall was unexpectedly poured into the cup of bitterness which the Vicar had brewed for himself. The under-handed schemes and dark designs which had been concocted and fostered by him began to recoil on his own pate, while the studied insult of years flung at the unresisting people at the shop, at last produced their legitimate fruits, which sent the bitterest pangs of maddening vexation through his spirit. He awoke to the conviction that his antecedents were fully known to the lady whom he had treated with contumely, and whom his father had ruined by a system of the darkest felony, aided by the dexterous powers of his son's hand and pen.

The departure of Mr. Willifer Elliott fell upon the coquette Eliza like a thunderbolt. She had, like a fondly, foolish, and vain girl as she was, believed that the young officer was seriously in love with her beauty and

character, and would very soon make her his wife—which would ultimately raise her to be Lady Elliott. On the strength of this vain conceit she had despised and rejected one or two respectable offers of marriage; but this kind of fatality had controlled her action for several years, inducing her to reject the honest and true for the showy and false. She recklessly deceived others by her arts, and by the arts of others she was in her turn deceived; but how much she was self-deluded by the Ensign's attentions, and presents of showy jewellery, remains to be told; at this time it is only necessary to say that the departure of the gay officer, without seeing her, or even writing to her more than a hasty note, to say that he was obliged to bid her a final adieu, fully opened her eyes to her real condition.

In relation to my own particular affairs, I may say that during the month after Christmas the Captain, now Sir Leo Elliott, had read my work of fiction, and had pronounced a flattering opinion. The work had also been

read by the person whose especial favour I sought, and whose good opinion I was, perhaps, the most anxious to secure. In this point I was left in utter darkness, for I could not by any means induce her to give me her opinion of the work, although all sorts of legitimate means were taken to cheat her into an accidental disclosure of her views and thoughts respecting it.

After the manuscripts were sent to London the incidents and characters in my work were the subject of conversation with my mother, who had not read it, and when we referred to particulars I often gave incorrect views on purpose to trick Jessie into an opinion; but her remarks went no further than correcting me, and in every instance she was right, which assured me of the accuracy with which she had read the work.

When Sir Langton's remains were taken from the Mansion to Edgecombe church—followed by a long line of gentlemen of



his own order, yeomanry, tradesmen, and peasantry—a little incident occurred which must not pass unnoticed, for in itself it has interest, and it led to an act which unfolds the character of one or two of the persons already mentioned.


It must be stated that Captain Leo had certain notions about burials, which induced him to act somewhat contrary to common custom. He would not have a hearse, but arranged to carry his dead on a bier by relays of men—not on their shoulders, but underhand as it is called—ten on each side, and himself carrying the pall at the head of his dead brother. All persons, gentle and simple, walking on foot from the Mansion to the church. All—no—all save one, and that one an unexpected mourner. It was a sight long to be remembered, and never to be forgotten by the people of Timberton and Edgecombe.

When the bier had arrived at the gate of the church-yard, and the carriages of the nobility and gentry which were present were

about to pass by the gate, an unexpected figure of a woman enveloped in a black cloak reaching to her feet, and her head and face hidden with a white hood of many folds stepped out of Sir Langton Elliott's carriage and walked straight into the church without turning her eyes right or left or lifting them from the ground ; and took up a position at the foot of the vault, leaning over an effigy of a Knight Templar, where she knelt during the whole ceremony as motionless as the warrior in stone—dumbly praying with its mailed hands. Who she was nobody knew. How she got into the carriage or when, none could tell. Her hood only just allowed sufficient space for the eyes behind to see how to step. It completely concealed all her face. Her dress and manner of mourning added to the solemnity of the ceremony. When the coffin was let down into the vault of the Elliotts, and the clerk was in the act of sprinkling in the “Ashes to ashes—dust to dust,” who was also accompanied in the

same act by Captain Leo, the woman took from under her cloak a chaplet of withered grasses with a bunch of green holly with red berries in the centre and threw that on to the Baronet's coffin likewise, then instantly fell into the same motionless state until the burial service was over : nor did she move before all the other mourners had departed, and the shadows of night began to gather in every corner of the sacred edifice. When she did move it was so stealthily and suddenly that the few persons present at work at the vault were inspired with a sense of awe, which enabled her to make her departure as mysteriously as she appeared.

The fact of the lady in black, with a white hood, stepping out of the carriage of Sir Langton, gave a general notion to all who attended the funeral, that she was a person of considerable consequence, from which circumstance respect was paid to her of a kind which secured the manifestation of her sorrow from intrusion. The people who attended



the burial, left her in surprise, and wondering went home talking of the facts.

By what means she got into the carriage without observation, neither I nor Captain Leo could imagine, but we were at the time both satisfied that that black cloak and white hood covered from view the person of Ebna Ebonal.

## CHAPTER III.

THE SUMMER-HOUSE MYSTERY—THE CAPTAIN  
ILL AT EASE.

AFTER the funeral, Jerome Givington and I returned to the Angle House. Meanwhile he, by the way, talked about the singular circumstance which had happened, and gave my mother a relation of the particulars, after which she said—

“I incline to think that the person in question is one whom I much wish to see, and who can, at this time, render an unfortunate individual an essential service.”

In much surprise, Jerome Givington exclaimed—

“Indeed! then by all means let us take steps to find her. Who do you suppose that mourner is? Who is the unfortunate person to whom you refer?”

My mother looked at me very steadfastly, which induced him to turn his eyes in the same direction.

I said—

“That singular mourner was doubtless the woman born in the Dark Dingle, near the Slinket Wilderness—Ebna Ebonal!”

My mother’s expression distinctly said, “Yes—yes! you are right,” at the same time Jerome said—

“And who is the unfortunate one whom she can benefit?”

I was sure the gipsy could serve two or three persons if required. There was my own mother and myself, who had been served by Ebna Ebonal more than once. There was Dame Wilson and Jessie, for whom I was

well assured she had been engaged in some mysterious business, for her visit to me on Richmond Hill, and at my apartments in Brompton, fully settled that point. There was Captain—Sir Leo Elliott—whose ways and doings were better known to my mother than any other person, though at first sight it did not appear that he could be called unfortunate, in the obvious sense of that word.

It was nevertheless true that, in my mother's sense, he was a very unfortunate man, for he had a most loving and affectionate nature ; and having lost a beloved wife, under terrible circumstances, and a helpless infant saved from death, to be lost to his sight it seemed for ever, without any proof of the subsequent existence of the lawful fruits of his marriage, who was then the legal heir to all the landed estates of the Elliotts, and the old title—meanwhile ever haunted and harassed with an ever active yearning of soul, to solve the mystery, and discover his lost infant, or some proof of its death, yet yearn-

ing in vain. Another person, at this point of my reflection, rose to my thought, who in a different sense was "unfortunate," namely, —Eliza Wimbush, who had been flattered by the gallantry of the Ensign.

There was some considerable mystery hanging about the early history of this vain daughter of Eve, and her connection with the Captain's son had been in some measure countenanced by the father—as my mother thought unwisely, if not somewhat unhand-somely, and she had most distinctly told him as much with calm displeasure.

My mother, as if intuitively conscious of my thoughts, at that moment said—

"You suspect I mean the misguided girl, Eliza Wimbush, and you are right, for during the funeral I have been made acquainted with a fact which troubles me. I now want you to go and see Captain Leo, if possible, and learn of him where to find Ebna Ebonal, for I suspect, by this time, he knows all about her movements. Tell him, Harry, that I re-



quest his help to find and send the gipsy to me this night, and say also that I know a fact which he ought to be told this evening. Leave it to him whether he ought to come forthwith to the Angle House or not."

I understood my mother's meaning, and her manner too well, not to know that promptness was required of me.

As I crossed the Green by the Trinity Oaks and the Stocks, I bethought me that I would go along a bye-path to the Mansion, being more likely to meet with the Captain that way, as he might be found going to or from the old summer-house. As I neared to the place, I found it so dark that I could not see a step before me, owing to the overhanging trees and surrounding evergreens, for all the snow which fell at Christmas was gone.

In a short time I found myself at a wicket gate, a few yards from the summer-house: the gate was affixed to the stems of two fir trees, which grew very close to each other. Before opening the gate I stood with my hands rest-

ing on the top rail, and quietly glanced up and down the antique building, and on the ground about the steps, which I could dimly discover cutting against the dull clouds. I stood in perfect quiet for the space of two minutes, when I was arrested by a glance of light shooting by one of the glazed loopholes from the inside of the building, and though in less than a quarter of a second I was assured that some living person was inside, and who so likely as Captain Leo.

To stand or sit and be absolutely still seems an impossibility. To ears quickened by emotion, especially in the depth of darkness and solitude, it is astonishing how small a sound reaches the sensorium. I could hear distinctly the beating of my heart, yet it did not throb beyond its usual force, the air seemed as still as death—I could hear a dull sound of words in the summer-house, and the surging of my own lungs, as the air passed in and out of their cells—I could hear the crepitation of my clothes produced by my

respiration—I could hear I was not mistaken, the inspiration and respiration of animal life close to my right hand and my left. I said softly, “Who is here?” At that instant I was conscious that two men were standing beside me leaning against fir trees which made the sides of the wicket, and each laid at the same moment a hand on my shoulder and said—“Seth and Samuel.”

The shock produced by their touch would have been far more thrilling, coming so unexpectedly, if it had not been at the same moment accompanied by the names of Seth and Samuel. The balance of mind was restored as soon as disturbed, but whether Seth on my right hand said “Seth and Samuel”—or Samuel on my left said “Seth and Samuel,” or whether they both spoke the same words at the same instant, I am not able to affirm; but the sound seemed to me as distinctly each side of me as the touch of their hands on my shoulders. The words of the old woman of Banbury might be safely used by me—

“Each one was so like both, I could not tell the t’other from which.”

I at once comprehended several things and said—

“Seth and Samuel, you are here waiting for Ebna Ebonal and I am come to speak to the Captain, how long have they been in the summer-house?”

“Long enough to have settled the matter in hand I should think,” said either Seth or Samuel—to which I added—

“And which will take you far away from the Dark Dingle for a season, aye?”

“Aye—aye—it may be,” added Samuel or Seth on the other side of me.

Without saying another word, I walked straight to the steps, and with distinct footsteps ascended to the door and gently knocked with my knuckles. A moment’s silence and I clearly said—“Harry Neville.” Captain Leo opened the door, and added—

“Come in.”

The door closed and I saw by the light of

the lamp that the gipsy was not in the room, and the time was not come for me to let him know that I was aware who was in the building. I briefly informed him of the object of my visit. I made no reservation of knowledge and at once proceeded to tell him what had just taken place at the wicket gate, from which he was left to make his own inferences whether Ebna Ebonal should be called to our consultation in *proprie personæ*, for he was of course aware that I knew she was on the staircase which led to the room above. He had taken me by the hand when I entered the room, and he held it all the while I was telling him the object of my visit and the event at the wicket, nor did he loose it until he had said—

“Harry Neville, does your good mother refer to the girl, Eliza Wimbush, as the ‘unfortunate person,’ for whose welfare she wants the service of Ebna Ebonal?”

“She does, Captain Leo.”

“You know she is in this place?”

“I believe she is.”

"Exactly—the difference between knowing and believing is very great. I wish I knew the early history of this girl, Eliza; perhaps, your mother can tell me? Do you know if she has been over to B—— to meet my son?"

Here I hesitated for a moment, knowing that she had been there on Christmas Eve, though she did not see him; and I did not know whether the gipsy had informed him of the adventure in which I figured as Major White. As I paused, he looked at me keenly, yet calmly, waiting my reply. There was a certain bend in his upper eyelid, which reminded me of something which I had seen before, when he was angry at the Vicar's behaviour towards Dame and Jessie Wilson. He still held my hand firmly grasped in his as I said—

"You forget that I did not return to Timberton until Christmas Eve; since that time I do not think she has left her father's cottage."

“And on that eve she travelled from B—— in company with Ebna Ebonal, and Seth and Samuel—”

“And a Major White,” I added, whose name concealed the identity of Harry Neville.


Another hearty pressure and the Captain loosed my hand, saying—

“Very good—very good, all is plain now. Yes, yes, here the lady is whom your mother wants to see; come to our consultation, you crafty baggage, you did not tell me the whole truth.”

While saying this the gipsy stepped into the room as he held the door open, and added—

“Ebna Ebonal never did, never will betray the confidence placed in her by one man to gratify the wish of another, though he were twice as great and rich as the heir of Timber-ton and Edgecombe.”

“And for that I honour and trust her,” replied the heir of those estates; “but I now understand why Eliza Wimbush should have made such inquiries about a Major White.



I could not imagine the object of the consultation in the summer-house, but it was forthwith settled that Ebna Ebonal should remain there, while the Captain accompanied me to the Angle House. Meanwhile she was to refresh herself with a good supply of ham and beef sandwiches, and some good old port, and Seth and Samuel likewise. At the wicket gate the twin brothers still stood concealed until the Captain ordered them to go into the place to sup with their mother and prepare for a journey.

“Oui—oui,” said Seth or Samuel, or both.

A very few minutes sufficed for us to reach the Angle House.

My sister was gone upstairs with her child and my mother and Jerome Givington were standing opposite each other by the fire when we entered. Some few hasty expressions of sympathy and condolence having passed, my mother spoke as follows :

“Captain Leo, you know quite as well as I do that a foolish and a highly improper con-



nection has been fostered between Mr. Willifer Elliott and the poor deluded girl, Eliza Wimbush, but perhaps you do not know that this has ended in her rushing down the road to ruin."

The Captain looked surprised and angry, in such a strong degree that my mother suspected he was displeased with her, for she went on to say—

"You may feel angry at my remarks for the moment, but—"

"Not a moment at your remarks, Mrs. Neville, but at the cause of them," sharply replied the true-hearted man.

"That is well; then I am sure you will agree with me, that every reparation that can be made ought to be made, to mitigate a very great calamity, which may, if active steps are not taken, result in some desperate and fatal disaster."

"You take me by surprise, Mrs. Neville. What has happened?"

"Eliza Wimbush, sometime during last

night, secretly left her home, and has not been heard of since, until this evening, when her father received a line from B——, to tell him that she was going down to Plymouth after Mr. Willifer, determined to make him marry her, or she would never return to Timberton again a living woman. This is a calamity which in some degree lies at your door, Captain Leo, for encouraging your son in his gallantries with this poor, vain, girl, to divert his thoughts from another object. Your good sense, I am sure, will understand my motive in thus speaking plainly. Her stepmother is—”

“I thought she was her own child, Mrs. Neville; is she not?—but no difference—ay—not her own child? Well, what can I do in the matter? tell me, and if possible it shall be done.”

There was an unusual tremour in his voice, a want of perfect coherence in what he said; and though slight, it was felt by each person present. My mother continued—

"She is not her mother; I never knew that person. Some say that John Wimbush was not married while he was from the village, and that Eliza was a child left on his hands by his only sister. But all this is of no consequence now, Captain Leo; the object to be kept in view is to rescue her from desperation and worse evil. Do you know whether Mr. Willifer has set sail?"

"He set sail yesterday morning at nine o'clock. What can be done in the matter?"

"As yet this fact is known only to her father and stepmother and ourselves, for they have consulted me only, and I desired them to keep the matter quiet until I had informed you of the affair. You see what a terrible disappointment awaits her at Plymouth, nor are you incapable of forming a pretty correct idea of the revulsion of feelings which may distract her mind when the whole truth falls blankly upon her. You must rescue her from this, promptly yet quietly, and no

person can do the matter so well and surely as Ebna Ebonal."

"True, true, I see it all, Mrs. Neville; I see it all. It shall be done, poor child, poor girl, my son has acted very wrong; ah, so have I, no doubt, Ebna Ebonal shall be sent immediately. The girl shall be saved from further mischief if effort and money can save her. It shall be done. Do you think she has sufficient money to travel by coach?"

My mother was of opinion that she had enough, perhaps, to carry her to Plymouth, not more, when the hour of darkness and desperation would overshadow her with ruin.

He said—"Ebna Ebonal shall be despatched immediately. She is now waiting to be sent off to Southampton on business. She and her sons, Seth and Samuel, shall go off to Plymouth forthwith."

My mother seemed a little surprised that the gipsy was so close at hand; but a reflection about the strange figure of a woman at the funeral confirmed her that the two were

identical. I had just before received a proof that Ebna Ebonal was no blab—that the Captain knew nothing of Major White—nor the people at the Angle House anything about the disappointment of Eliza and her ride from B—— with him on Christmas Eve. I do not believe that either Seth or Samuel knew why or wherefore their mother was about to start for Southampton. At that moment they were making a substantial meal and warming their blood with good old wine at the antique summer-house, and beyond that fact they only knew that they had some work to do under the command of one for whom they would have been ready at a moment's notice, to spill every drop of their heart's blood if circumstances required it.

The word of Captain Leo was sufficient for my mother; for she knew that he would be better than she could calculate in the matter. He took her by the hand and said:—

“I reverence you, Mrs. Neville—the poor girl shall be saved from shame and ruin, if I

am able to devise means to accomplish the purpose. Good night, God bless you. Good night, Mr. Givington—comfort the Wimbush's discreetly—good night. Harry, walk with me, if you please."

In silence we crossed the Green, and struck into the same path which I went down before, and soon found ourselves near the wicket gate. He did not speak until we stood in the open space, between that and the summer-house; when he laid his hand suddenly and heavily on my shoulder, as if he were very tired and said: "Harry Neville!"

"Sir," I replied, and paused; we both stood still.

The Captain breathed thickly, deeply labouring like a man suddenly seized with a strong fit of asthma, and as he did not speak I asked, "are you ill, Captain Leo?"

"Ill at ease," he said, after a pause, recovering himself with a few deep respirations.

"Ill at ease, Harry Neville; and I must tell you that I tremble at a thought which has

crossed my mind since I laid my poor brother in the family vault."

He paused, again still pressing hard on my shoulder. I waited for him to proceed. He began again—

"Harry Neville, for a year past the desire to discover some clue to find my lost child has been growing daily stronger and stronger, and now it has become a passion which consumes my soul. Your good mother knows this—" again a long pause followed, in which I was also struggling with myself whether I ought to speak or not, but at last stammered out—

"My mother knows this state of your mind, and Ebna Ebonal also?"

There was a convulsive jerk in his arm as I pronounced her name, but he did not remove it from my shoulder, but whispered earnestly—

"The gipsy believes that she has found a clue which will lead me to my soul's desire; and wants the money to-night from me to

enable her and her sons, Seth and Samuel, to go to Southampton to follow it. I care not for a thousand times the money she wants if she is not a liar and a deceiver. Your mother believes she is a truthful woman—what say you ?”

In an instant I said earnestly—

“ Captain Leo, I would stake my life on her word if it were necessary, and should feel secure.”

“ I am happy to hear you say so ; but if it had been otherwise she and her sons should ride by coach to Plymouth after this poor girl, and save her ; I will provide for every emergency. But somehow or other I am haunted with a damning thought, Harry Neville, which for two hours has made my bosom like a very hell.”

“ What is the matter, Captain Leo,” I said eagerly.

“ Oh ! horrible, I fear, that if Ebna Ebonal has found any real clue to my child it will end



in this poor deluded girl, whom I fear my own son has ruined. For God's sake, Harry Neville, let it not be known in the village that Eliza Wimbush is gone after my son. I will talk to you to-morrow of this matter—there is no time to be lost.”

We were in the summer-house in a minute. Seth and Samuel rose up as we entered; their mother sat still, thoughtfully looking at the Captain. He briefly said—

“I speak to your mother,” and Seth and Samuel glided out of the room almost by magic.

He then gave her all the information respecting finding and bringing home Eliza Wimbush, which she took as if a matter of course; “it shall be done, your honour. Harry Neville has heard me say I was born in the Dark Dingle.”

Her eyes were nearly closed, and the sights looked like sparks of fire.

The Captain repeated: “the Dark Dingle!”

and took out of his pocket ten sovereigns, and four ten pound Bank of England notes, saying—

“Ebna Ebonal, money is spent well and wisely, when the end for which it is spent is accomplished. Bring this deluded child home in secret—the method I leave to you and your sons; make all speed, she is twenty-four hours before you. Write to me from Plymouth, and if needs be, from Southampton, by the way of which you will return with Eliza.”

Up rose Ebna Ebonal, without speaking, but gyrating her wrinkled finger above her head, she glided quickly into the dark night.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE NAME, THE REAL NAME—THE PASSION  
OF EBNA EBONAL TO FIND OUT THE NAME—  
WHO IS ELIZA—LEO'S MARRIAGE.

THE next morning I received a letter from London, from the gentlemen to whom I had offered my work of fiction in three volumes, offering me what I considered a handsome price for the copyright, and requesting me to give them an interview at my earliest convenience!

This was an event which gave me very great

satisfaction, so that I laid the letter before my mother, as she sat over her last cup of tea at the breakfast-table, and left the room to give her an opportunity to indulge her emotions, while I went up to my study to give vent to my own. In the space of half-an-hour she came in to my room.

“Harry, you have succeeded in your purpose far beyond my expectation. I could not have believed a year ago that any work produced by your hand and brain would have sold for the sum of money offered. It seems to me too much to be true. Are you quite sure that this is not a mere practical joke?”

She looked into my face with such maternal love and unsophisticated simplicity, that I could not help laughing, and I said—

“The way to be quite sure of the matter is for me to go to London and close the bargain, and put the cash in my pocket.” I felt sure she had something else to say, so I waited to hear. After she had walked several times up and down the study, and duly poked the

fire about every time she passed it, quietly putting the books on the shelves which I had left out of place, she returned to the table and took up the letter again, and sat down in front of the fire, and read it over once more, most carefully; then, without turning to look at me, she began again—

“Harry, if this is a truthful letter—and it really looks like it in all its points—I do not see any reason why you and Jessie should not be married, for you will have by the sale of this work of yours, more money in hand than your father and I had the first three years we were married.”

My heart throbbed against my side too violently to suffer me to speak without betraying my emotions; so I was silent. Without turning, she continued—

“With your habits of life, and those of dear Jessie’s, this money would keep you five years comfortably at the Angle House, where we have many advantages; and my means also are increased by this unexpected legacy

of Sir Langton's; and you know that my personal expenditure is not likely to increase, though, thank God, I trust I shall be able to render the poor and afflicted more assistance. You see the old saying is very true that 'a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,' and you have—no, no—I am guilty of talking of the chickens before the eggs are hatched. How easy it is to slide into vain speculations. It is like gliding along smooth ice into the middle of the running stream from which deliverance is difficult."

The prudential self-corrections of my mother made me express my feelings first by laughing, and then by saying—

"You had better say no more about the matter until I have been to London."

"I think so too, Harry;" so to change the subject, "can you tell me why Captain, Sir Leo was so unusually excited last night?"

"Most likely he was vexed at the conduct of Mr. Willifer," I replied; "which, added to

the melancholy events of the day, are sufficient to account for his emotions."

"Most likely—most likely," she rejoined, and again gently poked the fire about ; at which Jane came in with a note from Sir Leo—for me, to request that I and Jerome Givington would call upon him at twelve o'clock. I gave the note to my mother, requesting her to show it to Jerome, that he might not be out of the way at the proper time. She took it down to him a few minutes after, and left me to my own reflections. These in a short time urged me to take a walk to the village shop and rejoice in the light of Jessie Wilson's affections ; and inform her and Dame Wilson that I should go the next day to Town for some two or three days, on especial business. Their anxieties about the strange mourner had been increased by imagination and rumour, and several versions of the fact took singular phases of human credulity— one tale said that the figure in black

with a white veil, first made its appearance coming out of the vault as the coffin of Sir Langton was let down. Another stated that it was first seen in the church, all of a sudden, nobody knew where, and that it disappeared in the vault, going down with the coffin like a blaze of light and glory. Another stoutly asserted that it first became visible at the churchyard gate, carrying the front part of the pall, in the same manner as the Captain did the part at the head of the corpse ; and finally disappeared through the roof of the chancel after all the people had left the church, leaving behind a strong odour of burning myrrh and ambergris—some averred that the scent more resembled cedar-wood and pitch. A few ill-natured or facetious people—no community is without them—stoutly maintained that the scent was sulphurous in the extreme, especially after the crown of nightshade was thrown into the vault with a hysterical laugh, which was heard for twenty-five minutes after echoing from the vault to



the roof of the chancel, from the chancel roof to the vault. It was astonishing to think with what rapidity tales of this nature became current in the village.

As Jessie was busily engaged in domestic matters in the house, I stood by the fireside chatting about a variety of trifling things which gave a beautiful fascination to all which transpired.

Dame Wilson was specially attending to the shop ; but as customers at that time of the day were few, and often, like angels' visits, far between, she came into the house to join the conversation. This was very pleasant for more reasons than one, for I wanted to find a chance to possess myself of the real name of one whom I resolved to marry. I had formed several schemes in my mind how I would talk to them, especially to the aunt, to start the subject of the name—the name—the real name—and abandoned them as soon as formed. The way the fact had come out that the name of Wilson was an alias—the manner of Dame

Wilson towards the Vicar—all conspired to fix not only my thoughts on this point but those of my friends. That name would never fall from the lips of the Vicar. In addition to this the anxiety of a different nature manifested by Ebna Ebonal to learn this concealed name, added to the mystery.

What on earth could the gipsy want to discover—by discovering who Dame Wilson was before she became the shopkeeper at Timberton?

While the aunt was in the shop I said to Jessie, point blank:

“Jessie, my love, has your aunt told you your real name?”

“No, Harry! Why do you ask me so blankly?”

I said, “Because a certain lady very lately gave me a bit of advice.”

“About my name—ay? Are you sure you have not been asleep and dreaming? I’ll bet all the yellow guineas which my uncle Benjamin will leave me as a fortune, and his

yellow jaundice into the bargain, to a copy of your fiction to line my bonnet trunk—that that ghost of a lady, who brought the odour of Paradise to Sir Langton's funeral and left the fumes of pandemonium, put it into your mind to ask that question? What say you, will you wager?"

She looked at me archly, as if she would say—"You know the unexpected mourner was Ebna Ebonal and so do I, and that thereby hangs a tale." Not choosing to recognise her sagacity, I quickly said—

"Your uncle Benjamin may leave you as many yellow guineas as he likes, but I hope he won't leave you his yellow jaundice into the bargain!" She had the flour dredger in her hand at the time for she had been making a pudding, so she gave it a twirl and threw the dust of the staff of life in my face and well powdered my coat collar before I was able to clasp her in my arms.

"There, sir," she said, "you only want a pig's tail stuck in your hair to hang down

behind to enable you to set up for a Legum doctor, and write L.L.D. at the end of your Harry Neville."

I do not blush to own that I more than once or twice kissed her glowing and ruby lips before she escaped from my arms.

"Pray, madam, I should like to know which would give you most satisfaction, an addition to, or a change of half your name?"

She said, laughingly, but withal provokingly :

"Oh, that depends upon the nature of the metamorphosis contemplated. I like the name of Elliott, but Willifer is abominable ; but I see you dare not take my wager, though I think it 'long odds.'"

A knock at the shop door still detained Dame Wilson, and left me to continue my purpose, so I said—

"No—no—Jessie, I won't wager unless I am sure of winning from you the last portion of your uncle Benjamin's legacy. Don't you think a little yellow jaundice would improve

my cheeks as much as it would vitiate my digestion?"

"I dare not give an opinion about such a recondite subject. You had better ask Nora Whitehead or blackhead Ebna Ebonal."

Looking at her thoughtfully, I said, emphatically—

"Jessie Wilson!" I saw that my glance and voice had fully arrested the current of her thoughts, for she, as abruptly, added—

"Harry Neville!"

We stood looking each other in the face for a few seconds in silence, and it was a supreme pleasure to me to feel that there dwelt beneath her light-hearted gaiety and serene good humour a depth of thoughtfulness and mental life, which would make her love, a treasure beyond the purchase of heaps of yellow guineas.

I then asked—"When I go to procure a license, which will enable me to 'make the Angle House more perfect than it has been for many a day,' as a certain lady once wrote,

can you tell me what name I must give to the authorities?"

Dame Wilson was quietly coming across the house passage as I spoke, and distinctly heard every word I uttered. I was conscious of the fact, and in reality intended it should be so. Jessie replied, in sober seriousness —

"Harry Neville, I cannot, if Jessie Wilson is not my name."

"When that hour comes, Harry Neville, I can, and I will. There is also one other person who can."

"True Mrs. Wilson," I added, "the Vicar can, but he will not."

"He dare not, Harry Neville."

"I believe you madam, but—"

"But what, Harry? Surely you do not feel the necessity of weighing your 'buts' and 'ifs' before a woman whom you find willing to give her greatest treasure in this life, into your entire keeping for better or worse, for richer or poorer?"

This was altogether unexpected yet as

delightful to my spirit as springs of water in a thirsty land. I had no actual secret of my own which I should have hesitated to pour into her ear. I did not know how sufficiently to express my joyous confidence in her noble character. I imperfectly endeavoured to tell her so and added—"My 'but' was only a sort of connecting expletive to a question which I was about to ask—and which I now find upon second thoughts ought not to be asked before a young lady."

At this—a peculiar knocking at the shop-door made Jessie say—

"There now, that's the old Captain and young Baronet, I'll go and ask him some questions not proper to be propounded in the presence of a young gentleman. Depend upon it, there are many such, Mr. Neville."

She threw off her apron, and was half across the passage before she had finished her sentence. As soon as she was fairly in the shop, her aunt lowered her voice and remarked—

"Harry Neville, the habit of twenty years

pre-occupied my mind when I said, I can and I will tell you the real name of Jessie—but—you see, I cannot get on without one—but I forgot for the moment that my brother Ben's letter intimates that my unfortunate sister was not an erring woman. There is, therefore, a possibility that at this moment I do not myself know her real name."

"And habit has, I presume, in a manner made you forget your sister's maiden name and your own also," I remarked indifferently in appearance. She added—

"Not for a moment, I never speak the word Wilson or write it without the spiritual symbols of the real name in sound and characters swimming before my mental vision and veiling my *alias* Wilson from my eyes."

After she had made this statement I felt certain that all hope of tricking her into a thoughtless blab of the name was an absurdity. Dame Wilson sat down by the fire and seemed disposed to cogitate, so I followed her example and remained quiet. My reflections turned



upon the following points which shaped themselves in my brain after this fashion—

“If Ebna Ebonal’s clue to the discovery of Captain Leo’s lost child should result in proving that Eliza Wimbush is that child as he fears—the condition of things is truly as the Captain says ‘horrible.’ Better not have troubled about a treasure so long lost—but time and space are annihilated by affection, especially when desire has become a passion. How strongly human beings sometimes rush on to ruin. William Rushworth, to wit—ah me!—it is strange—passing strange to say the least of it, that Ebna Ebonal should be so anxious to learn Dame Wilson’s real name—and to find out the antecedents of the Vicar of Timberton—oh! that would be horrible, indeed, if Jessie should be found the daughter of the father of Amy Rushworth!”

When I reached this point of my reflections, I said suddenly,

“Can you tell me, Mrs. Wilson, why the gipsy Ebna Ebonal is so anxious to discover

your real name, and the antecedents of William Rushworth?"

"Good heavens," exclaimed the dame a great deal taken by surprise, "I have had no idea that she was anxious or troubled herself about such a matter. What reason have you to believe she troubles about my name? I have given her no warrant or provocation for doing anything of the kind."

"Then the fact is the more singular, beyond doubt, for I know that it is a fact. Perhaps she wants to expose the Vicar for he has more than once or twice very grossly insulted her." The lady took up the poker and held it daintily in her hand and poked the ashes out of the grate as softly as though she were afraid of disturbing the blessed sleep of a suffering person close by. Having more by instinct than otherwise removed the ashes of the fire, she set the instrument down so softly that it could not have been heard by the watchful ears of death.

"Harry Neville," she said, with bated

breath, "tell me by what means you know this fact."

Without hesitation, I detailed every particular relating to her of what had taken place in conversation with the gipsy on Richmond Hill, and at my apartments, to which she listened with absorbing interest, and seemed to suffer strong convulsions of spirit. I remained silent to hear the result of my communication, but she showed no sign of speaking; meanwhile I endeavoured to conjure up every fact which I knew respecting the Vicar which could possibly throw any light upon the subject which held Dame Wilson spell-bound. At last a fact rose to memory which seemed to have some relation to her deep and thrilling cogitations, but before I stated it, I asked two questions by way of introducing the fact. The first was—

"Were you ever in the West Indies, Mrs. Wilson?"

"No—never."

In a few seconds, or long enough to feel that we were silent, I asked—

“When do you expect Mr. Benjamin Wilson in England?”

“Mr. Benjamin Wilson?” she repeated quickly, as if the sound of the name of Wilson did not suit with Benjamin.

“Oh—yes—I do not know exactly—but soon—It’s a strange state of society in Jamaica, Harry Neville.”

I replied—“So I have heard William Rushworth say. He lived there six months.”

If Dame Wilson had been shot through the heart with a bullet she could not have jumped from her chair more suddenly.

“Good God!” she exclaimed, “it cannot be true, Harry Neville. It is not true.”

She walked swiftly across the room, much excited, which instantly created a corresponding feeling in my own mind, so that in my turn I said—“For God’s sake, Mrs. Wilson, tell me what is the matter.”


“I cannot—I cannot—my thoughts drive

me almost mad. Do not let Jessie come near me, my dear man. I will be down stairs again in a few minutes."

She hastily walked up-stairs to the sitting room, leaving me wondering what disastrous circumstance could possibly have happened between her brother Benjamin in Jamaica and the Vicar of Timberton. In a short time the Captain—Sir Leo—left the shop, and Jessie returned to the kitchen, saying—

"Where's my aunt gone, Harry? Has she left you alone from a sense of duty—to answer your own questions? Is she upstairs? I want to speak to her."

Placing myself without any constraint between the doorway and my Jessie, whose brow seemed overcast with unusual weight of thought, I answered her briefly, and added, "I have been talking to my mother this morning—that is, my mother has been talking to me very seriously about you, Jessie."



"About me! well, what then? but I will hear when I have seen my aunt."

I then took her by the hand, and said—  
"Come to the front of the fire, and hear what I have to say first. What have you and Sir Leo been talking about?"

She replied, gravely—

"About a matter which does not immediately concern you, but it does my aunt, so as you have only stopped me to ask questions loose my hand and let me go upstairs."

"Not so, Jessie. I have something of very great importance to tell you, but you looked so grave when you came in that I thought Sir Leo had frightened you with a fresh edition of the supernatural mourner."

"He has done so, Harry, but in a way you little dream of; but, as I said before, it does not particularly concern you—at least not now."

"Whatever concerns either you or your aunt deeply concerns me as much this moment as it will when your aunt is my aunt,

and my mother your mother, my Jessie. I entreat you tell me what is the matter with you? What has the Captain been telling you?"

I held her hand firmly, and tried to look calmly into her face. She could almost intuitively read other persons' emotions.

"Perhaps it will be more important to know what is the matter with yourself, for if you have agitated my aunt as much as you are, something of very great import has passed between you. What is it, Harry?"

She held my other hand with hers so affectionately that I seemed to be almost suffocated with my emotions. I told her all the truth on my own part, repeating my questions and the answers of her aunt as they occurred; but when I stated the fact that the Vicar had been in Jamaica, she said with tender eagerness and thoughtfulness—

"It is passing strange, I cannot imagine what motive, what interest, that gipsy can have in endeavouring to find out my aunt's

name. It certainly is at the instigation of somebody else, and not to gratify an idle curiosity of her own. Do you know her motives, Harry? The Captain has just asked me if I had any idea why Ebna Ebonal was so anxious to know when, and by what ship, my uncle Benjamin would reach England. I did not know that she had any knowledge of the fact. I asked him point blank if he had informed her or any one else. He said he had not. I do not see why my aunt should be troubled about so simple a fact, as that of the Vicar having been to Jamaica. Do you know of anything connected with that fact to make it remarkable. Tell me, Harry?"

"I know of none," I said, distinctly and slowly as I could.

"You know of none, perhaps; but do you believe in any fact, Harry Neville, that seems to have any connection with my aunt's affairs, which gives significance to the Vicar's



having been in Jamaica, that's it. That is the question?"

I honestly said:—"There is no fact in which I believe that has any such connection."

At this we heard Dame Wilson coming down stairs. Jessie turned to meet her, looking as if she tried from the expression of her aunt's face at that moment to discover what had passed through her mind in her absence.

"What has Captain Leo been talking about this morning, Jessie. You look as if he had been telling you some strange story about the strange mourner."

"So he has, aunt; he believes it was the gipsy, Ebna Ebonal, and he says also that she is so madly bent upon finding out all the leading acts of the Vicar's life, that she thinks of taking a voyage to Jamaica, to learn how he spent his time there, before he took holy orders."

Dame Wilson sat down in a chair to save herself from falling. She was again taken by surprise, so that Jessie clung to her neck and bosom, with tender solicitude, to learn what on earth was the matter, and the meaning of these mysterious movements. The aunt, however, soon recovered her self-possession and said—

“I do not know how it is, child; but I have somehow got two or three fancies into my head that some trouble or other of an overwhelming nature is about to fall on our heads. I have never done an act in my whole life towards any human being that has not the approval of my conscience; and yet I now seem to fear the events about to take place, as if I were a criminal. How is it, Harry Neville; can you explain this state of my feelings?”

I endeavoured to show her and Jessie that the apprehension of coming evil, from the very nature of things produced a definite result in the mind, whether the person was guiltless or

not. The cause of the apprehension when unknown was from that very reason often more distressing, than a guilty consciousness during the condition supposed. The fear of something coming to pass, which we did not at all suspect, and which from its own nature was calculated to affect our spirits or social position, unavoidably produced a painful state of mind ! more or less intense according to the previous state of circumstances. "Perhaps you are afraid of discovering an unpleasant truth, that may checkmate, as it were, long-cherished hopes."

"I am going at twelve o'clock to see Sir Leo Elliott." Jessie looked first at her aunt then at me, all the time I was speaking, as if to catch every meaning which might lurk about my words, or our expression of face. She said—

"Yes—yes—something of this kind, too, is disturbing the equanimity of Captain Leo's mind—that I clearly discovered by his manner and conversation. I am more than half

afraid there is some evil spirit working mischief behind the curtains of Timberton. You may depend upon it, Jerome Givington will not take up his abode some future day at the Rectory of Edgecombe, without having his noble and pure character blackened for a season by some malignant, lying demon. I should not be surprised if Ensign Willifer Elliott, though he is a captain now, were made the scapegoat for a huge heap of scandal, now he is on the way to India. I have already heard some things which look very much like malignant falsehoods respecting that flirting, but not vicious Eliza Wimbush. Have you seen her lately, Harry? When was she at your mother's last?"

Jessie's words evidently had more meaning than at first appeared. I said—"Once since I returned home, though I have heard of her several times at the Angle House." My words evidently contradicted some foregone conclusion in her mind, for she said—

"Indeed!"

As the clock was on the stroke of twelve I made signs of going, and bethought me that I had not informed them that I was going the next morning to London. I promised to call again in the evening, and so bade them both good morning. Just as I was passing through the shop Jerome Givington came in to look after me—his serene face brimful of benevolence and intelligence, kind words and wise ones falling from his lips like vernal showers. We went forthwith to the Mansion, crossing by the kitchen garden, which conducted us into the path which led to the wicket-gate.

As we neared to the antique summer-house, I became more thoughtful than usual, which made Jerome several times look up in my face, and at last he said—as we instinctively paused to gaze at the view which suddenly breaks on the sight at that spot—

“Do you know, Harry, what object the Baronet has in view in this appointment?”

“In truth, Jerome, I have but a very hazy

notion beyond the probability of saying something respecting the thoughtless conduct of this coquette Eliza."

While we were standing there Sir Leo crossed the lawn, and, seeing us, hastily made towards the spot; and while coming onward pointed to the building close by, so that we met him at the steps. He was a man who did not stand much on the forms of etiquette, and a few seconds sufficed to place all three beside a blazing fire in earnest and confidential conversation.

He requested me to give him a full and particular account of all that I had said to Ebna Ebonal, and of all that she had said to me. I did so, and he paid as much attention to what I related as if he had been a judge "summing up" in a case of life and death. There was one circumstance, and one only, which I thought proper to keep to myself, but which has already been disclosed to my reader, viz.:—the fact about the Captain's marriage and the maiden name of the lady.

At the time I mentioned it to the gipsy, the only person to whom I ever had an occasion to do so, it will be remembered that she instantly bounded from my apartments in Brompton in a very singular manner. I then thought the fact of no particular importance, but now the matter appeared in a different light. I hesitated what step I should take—determined to revert to the fact and my disclosure of it to the gipsy ; then resolved to withhold it until I was fully satisfied of the full import of its significance. As the marriage took place in Jamaica, and as William Rushworth was in that place for some six months about the same time, and as the Captain had told me by several insinuations that he knew some facts about the Vicar and the so-called Amy Rushworth, his brother's daughter, added to my knowledge of the ruin brought upon Dame Wilson by the Vicar's father, aided by the son, and also of what had taken place just before at the shop, which I could not ignore ; nor what the Captain had

whispered to me the previous evening respecting his suspicions that Ebna Ebonal's clue, which she was then hunting, would terminate in Eliza Wimbush ; and at the same time myself suspecting and fearing that some false play had placed Amy Rushworth, Eliza Wimbush, and possibly Jessie Wilson in false positions during their infancy, for they were all three just about the same age—together made me pause before I made known to the Captain that I had told Ebna Ebonal the maiden name of his wife. I had not been enjoined secrecy on the point. I had learned the fact by a common occurrence, nor did the Captain appear to deem the fact a secret. That it was not generally known amongst his friends arose from the circumstances of her death, and as some of them, not knowing her character, supposed he had married beneath his position, they did not even refer to a subject which was deemed unpleasant. They knew not how much those painful facts influenced the after-life of the sea Captain and



the present baronet. I make no doubt my manner very much perplexed Sir Leo, for he frequently turned his bright and keenly-penetrating grey eyes right into mine, as if to take the sanctuary of my soul by storm ; nor was Jerome Givington less bewildered with doubt, judging from his expression, but fortunately for me the Captain struck upon a string which vibrated to his own cogitation and emotion—not mine—so that I caught it up, and repeated the tone with emphasis. He said, laying his hand on my shoulder, and looking me full in the eyes—it was such a glance as I never before encountered—

“Harry Neville, tell me, in one word, for you know—has Major White ever been guilty like that other officer?”

“Never.” I spoke with so much energy and so promptly that Jerome looked up so suddenly that I felt he clearly discovered from my answer that I must be myself Major White, an *alias* known to Sir Leo. He did not speak, but his reflections led him very

near to the truth in this as in most other instances of like nature, for he was gifted with high powers of intellect.

"I believe you, Harry: I hope your mother and you, Mr. Givington, will do all you can to keep a knowledge of the fact that this girl, Eliza is gone to Plymouth, from getting abroad in Timberton. I am more anxious about the poor girl by far than about my scapegrace of a son."

"I know you are, Sir Leo, and her parents are deeply sensible of your kindness in taking the steps you have to recover her, and too anxious as parents not to conceal a fact which immediately concerns none but themselves and their own daughter."

"There is no telling what is immediate and what is remote in such cases," rejoined the Baronet, thoughtfully; "my experience assures me of this too painfully."

"So does mine," I said to myself; but said to him: "By the bye, Sir Leo, I am going to London to-morrow morning on business, can

I do anything for you there. I shall be absent two days." He gave a curious glance at me, which I could not understand. He said—

"You go by the first coach, I suppose."

"Yes, if I can walk to B—— in time."

"You need not walk, Harry Neville; I want to go to B—— myself on business, I'll steer you over; the horses want exercise; but, come, gentlemen, let us go and have luncheon, the bell has rung the second peal."

The manner of Sir Leo was that of a self-possessed man ill at ease. We had gone down to him by appointment, expecting some important communication, but nothing had been said which seemed to require the interview, unless it was my emphatic "Never." It came out soon after I returned from London. We took luncheon talking of things in general respecting Timberton and Edgecombe, and at three o'clock returned to the Angle House.

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## CHATTER V.

EBNA EBONAL, SETH AND SAMUEL'S PURSUIT  
AND SEARCH.

EIGHT days and nights had passed by since Ebna Ebonal and her twin sons, Seth and Samuel, left the antique summer-house on their mission of mercy, carried out by funds supplied by the Baronet. Eliza Wimbush having commenced a career whose pathway looked pleasant enough to her thoughtless imagination, but every step tended to environments which, from their very nature,


would produce disappointment, misery, and self-contempt, was now plunging into head-long ruin from impulses whose principles had their seat in human virtue. To redeem herself from shame, from the emotion which her thoughtless passions and vanity had brought upon her, she had resolved upon a step which common sense distinctly saw must end more fatally to her peace, than she ever anticipated. I had been to London and back, and had transacted business to which I am about to refer. The Captain—Sir Leo—had gone here and there—first to the Angle House, then to the shop, to lay all sorts of strange wagers on all sorts of strange subjects, with one who was able to checkmate his extravagance; then crossing the path of John Wimbush, a very silent man, as he was at work in the fields, endeavouring to gather from him some facts respecting his daughter's infancy—then to an hour's study in the antique garden house—from thence to walking backwards and forwards on his quarter deck, sometimes in frost, and snow,

and rain, or sunshine, as if the elements in their wildest energy had no effect on his hardy constitution and bronzed cheeks. The Vicar had insisted upon his wife, my sister Mary, and Miss Amy, forming a friendly acquaintance with Jessie and Dame Wilson, and they had called several times at the shop to make purchases of various kinds, while he had been several times to the Doctor at Edgecombe, professedly to consult him respecting what he chose to describe as a palpitation of the heart, but in reality to enlist the bluff, true-hearted Doctor in his interest and schemes, for he knew that Sir Leo was fond of that son of Esculapius, being strikingly like him in character, and not unlike him in personal figure. The fact is, that old scandal which had lived and tided over the space of sixty years, made the Doctor of Edgecombe the son of the metaphysical philosopher and Baronet, Sir Winfred Elliott, the father of Sir Leo; but there seems to have been no particular grounds for such an opinion respecting

one who was a good man, and a philosopher beyond the trifling fancies of personal resemblance, which of course are hypothetical and of no weight in human affairs pertaining to physiology !

Jerome Givington had, according to his wonted practice, gone from day to day amongst the poor and afflicted of his flock ; gaining golden opinions from the lowly people and "topping folks" of both villages, for his unassuming conduct, his forbearing manner, his goodness of heart and intelligence, won their way in despite of all opposition. He was very soon as much respected, and loved in both villages, as the Vicar was despised, shunned, and by some hated and condemned.

I was eight days in London on Sir Leo's business and my own, and on my return found my friends in a state of considerable excitement, indeed they were painfully so, which cast a very chilling influence upon my pleasant feeling, for I had with me an assurance



of literary success, which I knew would be joy to my dear mother, and to that beautiful girl whom I so passionately loved, but every thought of myself was banished in the presence of the faces which watched my coming.


As I entered the sitting room, my sister met me at the door with tears in her eyes and love in her heart, and kissed me tenderly, and welcomed me home as if I had been absent a year. My mother sat by the fire and waited my approach, taking my hand and kissing me without speaking, and as I stooped over her she felt my tears fall on her dear and motherly face. Jerome Givington was lying on the sofa asleep with a white handkerchief bound round his temple, on the left side of which were unmistakeable signs of blood. My heart sunk within me as I sat down in my sister's rocking chair and looked at her child, who was sprawling on the carpet as contented as a cherub child could be amongst the flowers of Paradise. I could not imagine what had happened to make such a scene, and



was afraid to ask, lest I should disturb the person sleeping. As I held out my hands to the infant, the happy creature began laughing and crowing so loud that his father awoke, and looking up, he saw me in the room before him. In an instant his wife was by his side to ask him how he felt, and my mother came forward and inquired if he would have a little gruel, while I added as I took his hand, "How does your head feel." He gave my hand a hearty shake, which at once assured me that however ill he had been, his strength was returning.

"I am better now, Sara," he said; "you find me bandaged up, Harry, but I shall be all right again before long; we must not forget, Mrs. Neville, that this is the Church Militant."

Jerome looked into my face and smiled with a peculiar sweetness and melancholy, as if he really were at peace with all the world. While I stood looking at him and speculating about what had happened, he went on to say—



" I feel rather exhausted and a little giddy. I think a glass of wine or some warm brandy-and-water would do me more good just now than gruel. What do you think would be best? who's that just come in?"

My mother replied, " It's Doctor Benewell; the Captain sent for him. You shall have whatever he thinks proper."

My sister went into the hall to meet him, when Jerome said—

" Is it you, Harry? Am I sensible—why, what is the matter that the doctor is sent for? When did you return? Have I been asleep? Surely I am sensible—there, now, let me sit up—I feel a little dizzy—give me a glass of water."

Before I could reply to his questions, Mr. Benewell had hold of his wrist and said—

" Come, come; you are a little giddy, Mr. Givington—stop, let us have some brandy with that water, Mrs. Neville—he will soon rally. It is temporary exhaustion only.

Come, now, try this—drink it all down, if you can.”

“I feel as if I can do that,” he said, taking the glass in both his hands, drinking it at two draughts, without speaking.

“Well done—well done. You will soon be better,” said the Doctor.

“I feel better—a great deal better. Oh, yes, I can see everything clearly now—no, no, through a glass, darkly—through a mist. I can see you all clearly, now; not as trees walking.”

My sister and mother felt a thrill of delight to find Jerome waking up so clear-minded and sensible, for I afterwards learned that there had been serious bleeding and alarming symptoms.

“Now you are better, Mr. Givington, you can bear me to examine your wound.”

This was performed in a brief space of time, for my mother had finally stopped the bleeding from one of the veins of the temple

by a pellet of lint, which the Doctor thought proper to leave alone lest the bleeding, which had been profuse, should again commence. A few general directions were given about light and nourishing diet, and avoiding excitement. The Doctor took his departure, promising to send up a little medicine to quiet the system, and to call in the morning. When he was going out of the room I followed to learn if possible the cause of the accident. When I had returned, Jerome was so much better that he sat up and calmly proceeded to give me a detailed account of the matter in a way which sent joyous assurances to all our hearts.

He commenced by saying—

“Well, Harry, how have you settled the affairs with the publishers? I hope more satisfactorily than we have the battle for the Rectory.”

“A great deal more so,” I answered, “judging from my facts and your appearances. I suppose from your words that there

has been more than one officer of the Church Militant engaged in this battle?"

"Oh, yes; it seems a regular civil war—a little domestic—a great deal clerico—secular—a pitched battle about the loaves and fishes, which pitched me headlong against the corner of the fender and lacerated my temples, so that I was unable to come up to the 'scratch' at the proper time, according to the laws of the ring pugilistic. There were no 'fenders,' I believe, in the arena of the ancients, though plenty of defenders. This incident will do for you to work into your next novel, for as the saying goes, 'Truth is stranger than fiction.'"

"I am afraid you are talking too much, Jerome," said my mother, tenderly.

"Oh, no, I shall not hurt. I have no disease, and no danger of apoplexy. I have lost enough blood to prevent that, and really, though I may have been a great deal stunned, I am now as well as usual, and only feel about as tired as I used to do after my town duties

were over. I shall be glad when the tea is ready."

My sister instantly set about making tea.


"The Vicar called in just before dinner, boiling over with indignation because it was whispered about that he had forged a document and endeavoured to trick Sir Langton into signing it, to secure the living of Edgecombe. The Captain's valet did not scruple to talk about the matter as a nefarious transaction, and it seems somehow or other the Vicar understood that I had spread the scandal, as he called it, for, indeed, it was a scandalous piece of business. He would not take my denial, but persisted in loading me with all sorts of naughty names amongst which 'meally mouth—false-tongued—two-faced—sneaking puppy and liar,' were of the most amiable, so that I was at last provoked to say, 'If you don't leave the house, sir, I'll send for Dame Wilson to chastise you.' The truth made this very bitter, no doubt, and the moment it was out, I regretted

being so far provoked. It was too late, and he, under the impulse of his passion and resentment, struck me suddenly a violent back-handed blow, which you see has shut up my 'peeper,' as the boxers say, and it pitched me headlong against the fender, as I said before. What followed seems all confused until I saw you in the room. I remember hearing some strange screams, which I suppose came from our friends present, and I thought Captain Leo came into the room, surrounded with ten thousand shooting stars. I was fainting, I suppose. That's about all I know of the matter."

"It's a very sickening recital, and I would rather have died than witnessed the facts," said my mother.

"Yes, sickening, indeed," said my sister Sara; "but there never was a more perfect exhibition of lynch-law and speedy justice in any uncivil warfare before."

"Indeed! my Sara, how so; did you drive your Vicar out of the Angle House with the



broom? An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, is an axiom in ethics which is condemned in the code which we profess to believe, but too seldom faithfully practiced."

My mother took the child in her arms and went into the kitchen. My sister continued—

"Just as the Vicar was speaking, the Captain came into the hall, and heard the last few words by which he designated you, and saw him give the violent blow which knocked you down. He exclaimed—'You dastardly rascal! I'll chastise you, if I pay a thousand pounds for every blow.' He instantly began thrashing him with his cane from shoulder to flank, dealing his blows so rapidly that I could not see the cane go up and down, and could only hear the thwacking. The Vicar made a rush to catch hold of the cane, but the Captain struck his arm down so sharply that the Vicar howled out like a dog and ran out of the room and house. It was all done in less than two minutes, but I should think he gave him a hundred blows in the



time. I should think he is black and blue, and will be for many a day. In an instant after, the Captain picked you up in his arms and helped mother bring you to consciousness, in part, and stanch the bleeding. When that was accomplished, he went home and sent for Doctor Benewell. Since then, you know what has passed."

## CHAPTER VI.

COMBAT AT HOME—JESSIE'S BADINAGE AND  
NAME.

My mother returned with the infant, and Jane with the tea tray, when a pleasant, because significant, knocking was heard at the door, and the hand which made it, also opened the same and came in. It was Jessie Wilson, and her coming sent thrilling impulses through my heart. I rose up to welcome her in the hall, and took her by agreeable surprise, for she did not know that I had returned. She

had heard that the Doctor had been sent for hastily, so came to the Angle House just to inquire what was the matter. Before entering the room I told her that Jerome had had an accidental fall, and wounded his temple.

A gleam of joyous feeling enlightened the faces of all present as my bonnie Jessie entered the room. It was really like a "gleam of sunshine in a shady place," for the light of her eyes and the radiance of her countenance had a magical influence upon all people who came within their circle of magnetic power.

"Upon my word, Mr. Givington," she said, "you look as if you were a regular Carter, and had been fighting with Molyneux. Your 'peeper' is in mourning, I see. Pray, sir, did the blackamoor draw your 'claret?' You look as if you had lost a 'fairish drop of the ruby.' I wonder if I were to kiss your hand whether it would improve the colour of your cheeks."

“ You had better try the experiment, Miss Wilson,” said Jerome Givington.

“ I will,” added Jessie; and before he could move she had made good her word, and then remarked, “ I’ll bet my worn-out gar—*Honi soit qui mal y pense*—to your edition of skeleton sermons, and that is long odds on my side of the wager, that neither you nor Harry Neville can tell why doctors persist in calling a mulberry eye, ‘ ecchymosis.’ I see you are getting better, so I can banter you with impunity, but I am really very sorry to see your face and head in this state. How did it all happen?”

He to whom she spake said—“ Sit down by my side, you bantering beauty, and have tea with us, and say no more about it. Harry will tell you. How is Mrs. Wilson?”

“ Not very well, for she has been disturbed of her rest of late. She desired her love to you, Mrs. Neville, and to Sara—why, how nicely the baby looks to-day; give me the little dear, and then I shall be tempted to

stay and have tea. Bless his heart—you tea early to-day, Mrs. Givington. You little fatty—you dimpled darling—you chubby-faced cherub—when did your uncle come back again like a brass farthing—like a button shilling? You rosy-cheeked bishop—you son of a soldier of the Church Militant—why, he's as fat as my dormouse, but not half so sleepy—and all the rest of it, nevertheless, notwithstanding, whatsoever."

In this way the gay-hearted Jessie talked to the epitome of his father and mother combined, and made the child laugh and crow by her gentle touches of his flesh here and there, and the smacking kisses which she poured into his mouth, and bosom, and neck. It was exhilarating to witness a sight so tender, affectionate, and domestic. My heart bounded with joy indescribable as I looked at her in silence. It was rapturous emotion to believe that she would soon be the bride of my bosom, as she was then of my heart.

The tea being ready, my mother, with most

anxious feelings, attended to the comforts of Jerome, and it was inexpressibly delightful to see Jerome's appreciation of her attentions. We began tea with more cheerful faces and more joyful heart than seemed possible an hour before.

My mother inquired what business had detained me so long in London, which led me to refer to the first great object of my journey. I took out my pocket-book and placed before her eyes the acknowledgment from the banker at B—— of the sum of money held on my account before referred to as the offer from the publisher for my work. My mother said—

“It cannot now be said that if I speculate in thought as I did before, that I am boasting of my chickens before the eggs are—”

“Done very nicely, are they not, Mr. Givington? Shall I get the other ready for you—ay? that's right. Did you ever do such a thing in your life, Mrs. Neville? I cannot believe it possible. I am sitting

between two very remarkable men—gentlemen I should say—and feel the necessity to be very precise, one remarkable for his paleness the other for the latitude of his hair.”

“And you are remarkable for—”

“I know it, your reverence; for that of my forbearance, not tongue, for I have been remarkable for many years, according to tradition, for the shortness of that useful member. My aunt assures me that once I was so short-tongued that I could not speak the adverb ‘no’ to a sweet tart without tears in my eyes. I should like to see, and hear also, how you learned men account for a psychological phenomenon of this nature.”

“Psychological?” Jerome Givington repeated slowly, “does not psychology relate to the mind, Miss Wilson?”

“Oh, I see you want to make me guilty of using pseudology; but my wiseacre—wise-headed, I should say—tutor taught me never to use a word of which I did not know the meaning. I wish he always followed his—the

precepts of his mother. I will thank you, Mrs. Neville, for a little more sugar—saccharine matter sweetly sympathises with my idiosyncrasy; Mr. Givington, are not tears pearly distillations of intellectual dynamics?"

"I should advise you, Miss Jessie—"

"Pray don't, sir, I'll take nobody's advice, except Mrs. Neville's and my aunt's, if contrary to my esthetical perception of the congruity of truth. There the Captain, or should I say, Sir Captain Leo—or Captain Sir Leo—or Leo Sir Captain Elliott—Sir—which is proper—advised me to—to—well—I never! I have quite forgot what he advised me to do—well, so much the better, as I have now a true and substantial reason for not taking it—"

"To forget is not properly a substantial reason, let me remind you, Miss Jessie."

"I beg your pardon, my dear sir, my substantial reason was substantially insubstantial. I sit and nurse your son corrected—look how the curly-headed immortal is pampering his



substantiality—pretty dear shall have a bit of sugar, for uncle Harry has brought himself from London and a most ineffable odour of City life and Babylonian smoke.”

While Jessie was talking in this joyous strain of good humoured rodomontade, my mother quietly, looked at the two papers which I gave into her hand, and when she had satisfied herself she handed them to my sister, who looked at them with the same kind of emotion. During a pause in Jessie’s gay-hearted badinage, Sara handed her the papers aforesaid, which she instantly put into the hand of the child on her knee, who made a vigorous attempt to put them into his mouth with his sugared bread and butter. I looked a little nervously towards her, when Jerome said—

“Mind what the child is doing, Jessie. You have, I presume, given him the fruits of Harry’s literary labours—or the proof of them.”

“Indeed ! how fortunate. Children natur-

ally love fruit. When I was a child I could never go into the garden in the spring without my pocket getting full of green gooseberries. I have a *penchant* for blackberries and sloes in frosty weather—jelly made from hips and haws I have heard say sharpens the intellect, when taken fasting with vinegar, brimstone, and treacle. It is well for all people to know, who have the care of children, that the things I have mentioned make a most pleasantly disagreeable linctus for liver-bile-duct bowelism in children. Naughty boy!—there, you must not suck this forbidden fruit of Uncle Harry's any longer—give it to your dear daddie, my little duck-a-darling. There now, did you see that, he verily knew what I said about forbidden fruit—understood it better than Eve did the devil's discourse about the tree of knowledge."

My mother and Sara, during the tea, gradually relaxed from the anxious and sorrowful state of mind in which I had found them, and which was far from having passed away when

Jessie came to the Angle House. If she had not had some suggestion made to her of the nature of the contention which had passed, her keen wit and acute understanding gathered up the leading facts by intuitive perception from signs, full of meaning, however insignificant to common eyes. During this last sally of hers, they laughed outright, in which the child joined like a little fat bantam, until his eyes were full of tears.

The great object which Jessie Wilson had in view was accomplished—for our thoughts were diverted from the painful facts which had occurred—and the spell being once so thoroughly broken by a spell of a different character, the force of the former could not again return with the same power, and whenever it might again cast its shadow, she knew that that shadow would be supervened by the pleasant memory of her light-hearted badi-nage and genuine affection.

Tea being over, and Jerome, at the entreaty of my mother and sister, laid himself down on the sofa to rest, and I and

Jessie, somehow or other, found ourselves by the fire in my antique study. Having imparted briefly to her all the particulars of the scene which had taken place before my return, which excited her pity and indignation in no small degree, I proceeded to tell her of the results of my literary labours.

The contrast between Jessie Wilson's look, and manner, and form of utterance, as just seen when she wanted to achieve a purpose for the good of others—and when she was by my side alone, endeavouring to conceal her love, yet showing it by every movement and expression of her lips and eyes, was almost beyond belief. The respect, reverence, and love, which she had for my mother was second only to what she felt for her aunt; and if ever woman spoke a true word she did, when she said, "I'll take nobody's advice but Mrs. Neville's and my aunt's." I am sure she would have found it a moral impossibility to have acted in contravention of their judgment and feeling.

"Jessie, my darling!" I said suddenly, and then paused.

"What now, Harry Neville?"

"The last person whom I saw sitting in that chair, where you sit, was one whose advice you respect."

My heart began throbbing too much to allow me to proceed without speaking in broken accents, so I paused again.

"I love your mother, Harry."

"And she sat there and advised her son, saying—

"'Harry, there is now no reason why you should not forthwith marry Jessie Wilson.'"

I was standing at the back of the chair, leaning over it, until my head came almost on a level with hers: she had half turned round to look at me; but when I quoted my mother's words she turned away and looked at the fire, and her finely flowing brown and glossy ringlets concealed her face from me. She was silent, but from my position I saw that the beating of her heart made

her bosom heave and palpitate with a force almost convulsive.

I do not feel able to say what time passed in silence, but it seemed very long; but I broke it at length by saying—

“Do you think your aunt can find any reason why Jessie Wilson should not forthwith marry Harry Neville?”

“I don’t think she could. You had better ask her.”

“I mean to do so immediately, now I have your consent and advice also.”

“I did not mean you to use my words in that sense, Harry; but that you had better learn the fact from the fountain head.”

“I know you did, my darling; but there is one question far more important than that.”

“What is that, Harry?”

“Do you see any reasons why it should not be?”

Again there was a long pause, and I said again—and again also—“Do you see any reason why it should not be, Jessie?”

"I do, Harry."

"What! what reasons, Jessie?"

"Reasons touching my real name. What is it? Can you tell me?"

"Your aunt can—and she has said she will when the hour comes."

"Are you quite sure in your own mind that she can tell you forthwith whose daughter I am?—forthwith, I say. Tell me, Harry, has the fact never of late distressed your mind? I know, and you know, it has my aunt's."

There was no denying the facts of the case. It seemed before as nothing, but now it was set point blank before me it was distressing.

"You have no personal reasons, Jessie, against our marrying?"

"If I had I should not be here. You must first see my uncle Benjamin."

My sister came into the room to say that Sir Leo was come and wanted to see me, so we went down to the sitting-room together.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW INSTITUTION—WHAT SETH OR  
SAMUEL SAID.

WHEN we reached the sitting-room we found Sir Leo thoughtfully listening to some remarks of my mother, which she spoke in an under-tone, for Jerome had fallen asleep, his pale face looking as placid and calm as if no painful emotion or sensation had ever troubled his heart. It may be truthfully said that if ever any man was pure-hearted and noble-minded, and disinterestedly devoted to



the high and exalting duties of a religious life, and realised in his own bosom as a present reward "the peace which passeth all understanding and full of hope," that person was Jerome Givington. I believe that if William Rushworth had stood by his side when he awoke as we entered the room, he would have offered him his pardon with some sort of a remark as this, "You have done very wrong, Mr. Rushworth, you really ought to know better than give way to such irate conduct—for you torment no one so much as yourself. It unfits you for the enjoyment of this life, and you must be aware that it will not be a virtue in the life hereafter. Let it pass—how are all the Vicarage people?"

As Sir Leo caught a sight of his opening eyes, he moved to the sofa to inquire how he felt, before he spoke to either me or Jessie. This was one of those trifling actions which, as they spring from an indwelling principle, show so unmistakeably the real character of

the person, gave me a sense of pleasure which no personal attention could have in any way produced. It is in suffering, in affliction, in distress of mind, that we can and do, in spite of ourselves, show the real germ of our character. The persons present knew this truth feelingly, as well as any people in the world—and from that indwelling principle continually practised it as a spontaneous emotion.

The man who gave the cruel-hearted and irascible tyrant of a Vicar a sound caning for his brutal offence would have suffered his arm to have been cut off, before he could have lifted it to have injured and pained a living individual, merely to gratify his own conceits and humours.

“How do you find yourself this evening, Mr. Givington?” the Baronet asked tenderly, as he sat down on the edge of the sofa and took the Curate’s hand, “it was a vile blow, a dastardly trick, none but a coward would do such a deed.”

"The fall was unfortunate—but still it might have been far more serious. I am very much recovered, I shall soon be all right again, Sir Leo ; I thank you for—"

"Just so—he richly deserved that kind of chastisement."

"Your kindness to me I meant, Sir Leo, in—"

"In giving him speedy justice. I should not be surprised to see him as supple and obsequious as a whipped hound. Depend upon it, if I had him on 'board ship' his temper would be soon improved ; but you see he is a great man in Timberton, and his bad passions and early training have mis-directed his character, so that he likes to play the petty tyrant. Hitherto I have treated him with fifty times more courtesy than he deserves, because of his position as Vicar, and from the great respect I have for Mrs. Neville—but by 'my body and breeches' having come to a conflict with him, I was determined to give him punishment for an offence for which, however vile, he would not have been

otherwise punished, and a corporal assurance that I am his master in the line of action he choose to commence. Depend upon it he will behave better at the Angle House and in all Timberton in future. If a man is determined to play the wild beast, why one must treat him accordingly. Intellectual castigation and moral remonstrance have failed to interpenetrate his obdurate heart, so that there was no other way to chastise, than that of belabouring his indurated hide. I deplore the occasion. I see you will soon be all right, as there is no fracture.

“Well, Harry Neville, how do? You find we have declared war all of a sudden; but as the enemy has beat a retreat, having met with a sharp rebuff, he will be sometime before he again makes an assault on the Citadel, more especially now you are come to the rescue with—a spirited young volunteer—who has, I have found out of late, been some time a full private, and enlisted into your—ha!—your ha, ha—”

“Heart’s Corps will do as well as Petticoat Regiment,” added Jessie Wilson. “Pray, Sir Leo, did you ever before ‘halt and haw a’ in this fashion, when talking about assaults and citadels, civil wars and batteries, rescues, retreats, enlistments, pressgangs, and volunteers, and full privates, like myself. I thought jolly jack tars always had a good nautical volley of stormy oaths to fill up every *hiatus* as quickly as they would stop a shot hole in a ship’s ribs, or board the vessel of a bloody Frenchman, or get drunk when going down in deep water.”

“You see, Mr. Givington, that women are naturally eloquent, for words flow from their rosy lips as continuously as sand through an hour glass.”

“In one respect,” said Jessie, “they flow to achieve an important purpose, and that is more than can be pronounced respecting the words of most men—they help to stupify Time, not murder him after the fashion practiced by the masculine portion of human

bipeds, who dignify their babble as philosophical disquisitions and call their gossiping coteries scientific associations. I heard it whispered the other day that we were soon to have an amiable society of this nature in this village."

The Baronet, having exchanged glances with Jerome Givington, looked at me, when my mother said—

"Indeed, I have not heard of any such intention, though I have always had an idea that I should live to see the day when such a society would be established here. Mr. Neville once made some efforts towards achieving such an object, but in vain."

Jessie said—"I heard a person say it was to be christened 'The Timbertonian and Edgecombite's Literary, Scientific, Philosophical, Antiquarian, and Boobyistical Institution.' My informant said that the contemplated society would have a hall of science built at Timberton, but that it would be christened at Edgecombe by the curate,

and that Sir Leo Elliott would stand godfather for the bantling, as it was legitimate. I offered, and I am glad I did, as you, Mrs. Neville, approve of it, I offered in that case to be its godmother. If there is any sober truth in the rumour I, as the godmother-elect, should recommend that the first lecture should be delivered by Ebna Ebonal."

"On what subject, Miss Jessie—what subject?" asked the Baronet.

"Why, on that most valuable and invaluable subject so misunderstood or not understood by our unfortunate Mother Eve. How to find out who's who and what's what, and the difference between 'tweedle dum and tweedle de'—her twin sons, Seth and Samuel, as her left and right hand supporters, would be an admirable illustration of the last subject, for she might sing her finale by quoting the old woman of Banbury—'Each one is so like both, you can't tell t'other from which.' I saw those sallow-faced, lean-jawed, bright-eyed sons of the gipsy just before I came here, and—

dear me, what is the matter, Sir Leo? I'll bet three of my candied Siberian crabs, without any of the syrup, to five pots of your house-keeper's best marmalade, that I cannot tell you why you looked up so suddenly; because I saw Seth and Samuel, twin sons of Ebna Ebonal, if it were not, because you have the pins and needles in your leg—your left I mean—and did not expect them back to Timberton so soon."

As she said this the Baronet was evidently uneasy, and if he had not been fully aware of her acute observations and astute speculations, he probably would have suspected that I had communicated to her the way and manner those two men and their mother had been engaged. I felt sure that he did not suspect me.

"You saw Seth and Samuel before you came here. Are you quite sure of that, Miss Jessie?" asked Sir Leo.

"Oh, no, not quite sure, because there is always a doubt about the fact, for when one



says it is Seth and Samuel; it may really be Samuel and Seth."

"You saw Ebna Ebonal's twin sons before you came here this afternoon?"

"As clearly as I can now see my twin hands," replied Jessie.

"Did you speak to them or either of them?"

"I did not—Seth or Samuel or Samuel or Seth spoke to me."

My mother said, "That is contrary to your usual conduct, Jessie, my dear, not to speak when you are civilly spoken to. I really should like to know what they said to you, if it is not a secret."

"I should if it is a secret—secret or not!" added Sir Leo.

I looked at her anxiously, and Jerome put his head slightly forward to catch the words which she might utter.

"Well, to be sure, I am become at once conspicuous—the observed of all observers," slowly and clearly articulated she, "Seth or

Samuel or Samuel and Seth, said, 'A nounce of tardy-mardy-twist-ted 'backee;' that's all, gentlemen and ladies, and Jessie Wilson served in silence those twin sons of Ebna Ebonal."

At this she signified her intention of bidding us good night, for it had grown dusk.

Sir Leo said significantly—

"I presume Harry Neville will act as body-guard to the petticoat volunteer who has joined his Heart's Corps. When he has performed that duty, he will show himself at present quarters. Give my respects to Dame Wilson."

The Baronet gave her a military salute with true politeness; Jerome his pastoral benediction; my mother her maternal blessing; my sister kissed her in the hall; and I conducted her home, and saluted, kissed, and blessed her with my whole heart, and in a few minutes returned to the Angle-House.

## CHAPTER VIII.

HOW THE CAPTAIN'S WIFE DIED — EBNA  
EBONAL'S RELATION AND GYRATING WRINKLED  
FINGER.

WHEN I entered the parlour the conversation had turned into a different channel, that of early reminiscences, a subject at all times full of emotions which have become sacred and mythical by time, and the magical powers of imagination, which tinge even the cold realities of the present, with the hues of the divine ideal. My mother re-told with

tenderness and sanctified sorrow her first acquaintance with Sir Langton and Lady Elliott—which relation Jerome Givington had never before heard from her lips. She also tenderly touched upon the last parting scene on the Sunday evening, when Jessie sang and played those divine airs and “Vital Spark of Heavenly Flame.” It was something ennobling to see with what profound admiration the Curate looked at the relator of such self-sacrificing devotion to duty.

This vein of my mother’s led the Baronet into the subject which then lay, as it had long lain, nearest his heart—that of the death of his wife, and the loss of his child’s identity. The steps taken by him to recover and rescue the poor unfortunate Eliza from ruin were known to us all in common, for it was undertaken ostensibly at my mother’s request; but the fact that he had already engaged the gipsy and her twin sons, Seth and Samuel, to go into the same quarter of the kingdom for a different purpose, was known only to

myself. Jerome Givington's manly sympathy opened the heart of the sea captain, so that he gave him the following information which, in several particulars, was new to me—

“The fact is, Mr. Givington, about twelve months after I was married, my ship, which was then in the West Indies, was ordered on a cruise in the Mediterranean—we were then at war with France. I made arrangements for Mrs. Elliott to sail for England before I left, and we parted with a strange mixture of joy and sorrow—of hope and fear. By all our calculations of the time occupied by the voyage, she would reach Plymouth, to which port the vessel was bound, some three weeks or a month before her confinement. From that hour when we parted, which was for ever this side the grave, a series of misfortunes and terrible calamities fell upon our pathway. The friend—the only one I had in Plymouth, whom I had lived with in former days, and to whose care and attentions I had,

by letter, consigned my dear wife in her condition, for he was then married, and the father of three children—had, in my absence, obtained an appointment in the Civil Service in the East Indies, and had gone out with his family before Mrs. Elliott reached England. She had all necessary means to procure all sorts of comforts and the very best of attention which could be had, befitting her condition and our position in life. She was a lady worthy to be presented to a queen. In manners, education, and social standing, she would have passed muster anywhere. She was living with friends of mine, whom I frequently visited when I became acquainted with her good qualities and beauty, and from whose house I married in Jamaica. She was a perfect stranger in Plymouth, but as money and credit at one's bankers are able to procure every accommodation, she did not suffer from that cause. When she found that my friend and his family had left, she sent for the head preacher of the Wesleyans—for

she was at that time a pious Methodist—requesting him to call upon her immediately at the hotel to which she drove. She had confidence in him, and she wanted his advice and assistance in procuring private apartments in a respectable family of that sect. Through that gentleman's kind aid, suitable apartments were speedily found. Owing to unusual anxiety, perhaps, her confinement took place the night following her arrival, and the medical gentleman of the family was called in, and she gave birth to twins—a boy and girl. Everything went on well, and the family was living upon a small independence without business, though a large upholstery establishment was connected with the premises. These facts I learned from the doctor, who attended her in his professional capacity.

“Nine days after her confinement a frightful calamity blasted all my hopes, and left me a widower, and worse than childless. A fire broke out in the night in that part of the pre-


mises where huge heaps of combustible materials were stowed away, which raged so fiercely that the stair-cases were full of leaping flames before any of the family were aroused. All sorts of unexpected things now happened, or had happened just before. The fire-engine in that part of the town was gone to a fire which had broken out at a distance, so that half an hour was lost before one came. Long before then all communication was cut off with the lower part of the house. No ladders could be procured in time to extricate the sufferers. It was, from all accounts given by eye-witnesses, a frightful and heart-rending sight. I always feel unmanned when I think of it, even after a lapse of twenty years. To meet death in action at sea or storming a battery is nothing—absolutely nothing to the very sight of such a scene. Three or four ladies were seen running from window to window, frantic with fear and agony, seeking for deliverance and finding nothing, but frightful fire and death before



them. The family consisted of two ladies—mother and daughter, and one servant. In addition there were poor Mrs. Elliott and her twin babes, and a servant girl, hired into the house that day to attend the dear infants ; the nurse woman being obliged to leave for a night, escaped. The mother was burnt to death ; her daughter threw herself from the upper story endeavouring to leap to a shed or out-house near, and was frightfully mangled, and died on the spot ; their servant attempting to escape in the same way, perished also. My dear wife, with her dear infants and the nursemaid, were seen from time to time at the second floor window—their bedroom, in the most terrible condition, the flames from the window below them fiercely flashing up and blinding them with the flames or smoke every time they approached. Four human lives in that one room, and three of them dearer to me than all in life beside, within sight and twenty feet of a thousand men, and yet no means of saving them.

Every account that I could collect shows that the only sign of reflection shown by the poor creatures was by my sweet wife. She threw out of the window two blankets, and made signs, which were in a moment caught by the men standing near. A stout lot of brave fellows seized the corners and held firmly at a scorching nearness to the hissing and rushing flames. The flames sunk for a second, when the nurse-maid leaped from the window and was caught in the blankets without injury from the fall, but terribly burnt by previous attempts. Another moment my dear wife again appeared at the window and threw a heap of bedclothes through the smoke and flames which was caught safely, and found to be an infant, wrapped up and entirely enveloped so as to save it from danger in falling. Again and again momentary glances were caught of one in passionate agony attempting to approach the window, but in vain. She was seen with her other infant in her arm wrapped up in night clothes. The

excitement was terrible, the agony intense. Her situation most horrible. A desperate attempt was made again to throw herself and infant through the window, the frame of which was now one mass of fire. At that moment the fire engine was brought to work, and though meant well, was perhaps the means of destroying the last chance. My dear wife, with exhausted efforts, made an attempt to throw the infant out alone, and did her best, dear soul, but at the moment the rush of water from the engine pipe met the shapeless mass as it left her feeble hands, and checked the force, so that it fell back again inside the room. Once more she was seen making a death plunge with the infant in her arms—she fell across the window just sufficient time to be seen in the flames—recoiling in agony back into the room, which was a moment after filled with the horrible flames. Not a particle of her body or the infant's could be found after the fire was extinguished."



We listened to this agonizing recital with breathless silence, and if the circumstances had taken place the day before, the manner and agonizing expression of Sir Leo could not have been greater. He completely realized the condition in which his dear wife perished, so that his manly bosom rose and fell convulsively at his own relation, as he unconsciously rose from his chair and paced the sitting-room up and down, more than once going to the window, snatching the blind up and down with nervous instinct, and wiping his manly tears.

A long silence followed, for words are impotent before such soul-moving grief—such withering sorrow. Jerome Givington, whose eyes had been rivetted upon the face of Sir Leo with intensity of interest and deepest sympathy, was the first to break the silence. He did so by asking a natural question, the full significance of which he could not possibly know.

“My dear Sir, what became of the infant rescued from the flames?”

“God in Heaven knows, Mr. Givington—God Almighty knows. I feel that I could give all I possess to discover that dear infant—that dear object. How strange it is—this memory of ours—this sense of identity. I think of my dear wife as a sweet woman of twenty-five—of my lost child as an infant nine days old. In a short time all traces of the child were lost, and to this great disaster several things conspired, some of which lie at my door heavily—oppress my heart at times almost insupportably. I married without consulting my father; indeed there was no time for that, so that none of my friends in England knew about it, and as every article belonging to my poor wife was burned, except those which wrapped up my infant when thrown out of the window, and as she was unknown to all in Plymouth, nobody knew to whom to apply, all the people in the house

being dead, except the nursemaid who was just engaged, and did not know even the name of my wife. I was six months before I heard of the terrible event, and more than a year before I could return to England. The only letter which I received from her was written the sixth day after her confinement, by her own dear hand, informing me of my having become the father of twins, and assuring me of her comfortable position and desire to place her son and daughter in their father's bosom. I wrote to her regularly as usual, and was astonished one morning when the mail reached Malta, where my ship then lay at anchor, to find three of my letters returned by the Post-office, with the notice that Mrs. Elliott could not be found. I instantly took active steps to return home; but could not accomplish my purpose for more than six months afterwards. News reached me at the same time that my father was dead; and that after he was buried, my brother, Sir Langton and his lady, set off for the Holy Land. My

ship passed the 'Orient' one night in a gale, in which they sailed to Rosetta, as I afterwards learned.

"On landing at Plymouth I found all the particulars of the fire, as I have stated, but no clue leading to the discovery of the child. The surgeon having been called in hastily at the accouchment, and his fees paid at the time, and Mrs. Elliott being better than usual, his visits had been but few—even her name, from some strange oversight, was not at the time entered in his book, so that it had passed from his memory when I afterwards waited upon him. Through, and with him I found the nursemaid, who had been engaged the day before the fire, and who escaped with her life, from whom I learned that the lady, meaning my dear wife, rolled a purse full of money in amongst the clothes which wrapped up the infant. She did not know which child it was, whether the boy or the girl. I gave her some compensation for her suffering. One important fact was learned namely, that there was in the

presence of a purse full of money a motive to take care of the dear child, for the probability is that the sum was between one and two hundred pounds, and perhaps more. There was also a frightful motive to get rid of the child in that fact. I saw Mrs. Thoms, the nurse, from whom I learned that the infant was reported to have been taken to a gentleman's house in the neighbourhood; but my tracing on that clue ended in blank. Another report she remembered was that the child was taken to the workhouse to be kept till steps were taken to find some of the lady's friends. That also led to nothing beyond the fact that about the same time two infants went into the house one abandoned near the spot and one with a woman, both of whom were taken away by the woman a few weeks afterwards. She gave her name as Sarah Jarvis. It was concluded by the workhouse matron and master that the woman was the mother of both children, as she very willingly suckled the infant which had been exposed. Their leav-



ing the house created no surprise at the time, nor was there anything which particularly justified any suspicion that either of the children was the one saved from the fire. I offered a handsome reward to the woman who left the workhouse with two infants at the breast about the time specified, to be allowed to converse with her, for information which would be of great profit to her; but no clue could be obtained as to where or who she was. Nobody knew anything about Sarah Jarvis.

“One thing, however, struck me at the time forcibly. It was this—the first visit I paid to the nurse, Thoms, after I had been to the workhouse and had learned the name of Sarah Jarvis, she told me again of all the particulars of my dead wife’s confinement, and what took place daily, morning, noon, and night, and I felt like one whose whole life and soul were staked in all her replies. This she failed not to observe, and as I then thought endeavoured to comfort me by relating every minute par-

ticular. Notwithstanding the minuteness of her details, she never once referred to a matter which I was morally certain my dear wife would not, could not neglect, for she was truly conscientious in such matters. It was to offer up her prayers to the Almighty night and morning. As soon as she said as heretofore—‘That’s all I know, sir; that’s everything just as it happened.’

“I asked solemnly—‘What! did she not pray to Almighty God night and morning?’

“The woman for a moment seemed unable to speak. She looked stunned, but she did not change colour as I could discover; but in a minute she added, as if to ward off some suspicion by extra fullness of detail—

“‘Oh, dear sir, yes; the lady was a very godly person, sir; but you see, sir, I don’t pretend to know anything about religion, so did not like to talk about it; but the lady, sir, did not pray herself like, for as how there was a methodist parson, a friend of the lady’s, in the house, who had lodged there a few

weeks, you see, sir, and left a day or two before the fire, sir; he used to come into the lady's chamber with Mrs. Neeson and her daughter to prayer every night and morning. The preacher used to kneel against the chair beside the door, and the other ladies by the side of your lady's bed. So, you see, your dear wife did not pray herself, for as how the minister always prayed, and this is the holy truth, sir.'

"I then assiduously asked what was the name of the Methodist minister. At this question she evidently changed colour, though slightly. She positively could not remember, though it was a common name, and almost seemed at the end of her tongue. After she had vainly tried to recall the name, moved by some impulse, I said—

" 'How many daughters have you?'

" 'Two, sir; one married and one single.'

" 'Is the married one's name Jarvis?'

" 'Jarvis,' she repeated, 'Jarvis; no, her name is Sarah Jones—her husband's name is Jones.'

“ ‘ Oh, it’s Sarah, is it. What’s your other daughter’s name?’

“ ‘ Mary ; she lives with her sister at Southampton.’

“ ‘ So you cannot remember the name of the minister ?’

“ ‘ No, sir.’

“ Offer of rewards failing, I tried threatenings, without any better result, and left the woman and the investigation in despair. I then went to recover my health by three or four months’ residence at Cheltenham—where the affair had beforetime happened which left the young Willifer on my hands. It is a strange Nemesis—and this scapegrace of mine has deluded this poor Eliza to the very town where my sweet wife became an Angel of light.”

The Baronet had forgotten all about his dinner-time in the earnestness of his emotions, and when he had finished speaking he asked for a glass of wine and a biscuit. My mother for the five hundredth time expressed her

conviction that the child would be found, and she thought that the person called Sarah Jarvis knew all about the matter. Jerome Givington was also of the same opinion. My sister thought a great deal of light might be thrown upon the subject if the Methodist minister was alive—and she suggested that if proper steps were taken the name of the person might be discovered. as the movements of all the Methodist parsons were accounted for somewhere—that it must be known to many of people belonging to that body of Christians. This was an idea which had never struck the Captain—he caught it up with an avidity. As my mother was handing the Baronet the wine—a sharp but gentle tapping was heard at the door—Ebna Ebonal had entered the hall before I could open the sitting-room door.

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Neville, but I want to see Sir Leo Elliott,” she said, softly.

My mother said, as she entered the room—

“You have been engaged in a work which

all persons present are very much interested ; you can say what you please to Sir Leo either here or in another room, as you think proper."

"Speak here—speak here, Ebna Ebonal, have you found her—have you brought her back?" added he.

"And sure enough the child Eliza is now under the thatched roof of John Wimbush, she came into Timberton without mortal eye falling on her and, please your honour Sir Leo—and here be three of the ten pound slips o'paper untouched, the odd sil'er ane bit of the devil's dust I ha divided between the lads Seth and Samuel—and as for the particulars what matters."

The gipsy laid the three ten-pound bank of England notes on the table before the Baronet, who stood looking at her earnestly without a glance at the money, as if waiting to hear some word which would fill him with joy, or agony, or both.

"Safe—in her father's house—thank God."

"Safe, Mrs. Neville, beneath the thatched roof of John Wimbush, Timberton," repeated Ebna Ebonal, and Sir Leo sprung suddenly to his feet as if convulsed with some new thought. He looked at the gipsy, then pointed to the notes and said briefly—

"One for thee—one for Seth—one for Samuel, I will go and look at this humanity which has caused so much trouble. Under John Wimbush's roof you said, not under the roof of her father!"

"Ebna Ebonal never speaks of that which is hidden from her. The child is gone to her chamber and wants rest, not a spiritual apothecary or his reverence on the couch would be her man—God help his pale face—and if she were sick Doctor Wentworth would do the work better, but if she were in the straw the woman who nursed Chrysacoma Willifer would be more useful."

The Baronet was astonished.

Every word she uttered increased that feeling, and when she finished speaking he

still stood speechless gazing into the gipsy's face. My mother was also much surprised to hear the weird-looking woman use names which she had never before heard, except from Captain Leo's lips. As long as Sir Leo gazed at the gipsy the gipsy gazed at Sir Leo. Each seemed as if endeavouring to read the other's thoughts, without the doubtful process of words.

My mother had heard Captain Leo's offer to bet Ebna Ebonal about the Christian name of Ensign Willifer's mother, and how she refused when she could have bet and won, so that had a significance not perceived until this mentioning of Chrysacoma by the gipsy. The return of the large sum of thirty pounds at the same time gave a confirmation to my mother's opinion of that woman.

Sir Leo and Ebna Ebonal seemed as if they were mutually struck dumb and motionless. They had a death-in-life appearance, not to be described by words. One in deep-mourning with linen as white as snow—a spotless gentleman; the other a woman, in an old



and patched red cloak, with a hood over her head; her linen and nether garments torn and dirty with travelling—a perfect vagabond looking gipsy. I began speculating which of them would first speak, when Sir Leo seemed as if he had mastered his emotions, and said slowly:—

“And who nursed Chrysacoma Willifer?”

Ebna Ebonal answered:—

“Sarah Jarvis.”

It is impossible to describe the convulsion which was produced in Sir Leo's face and figure. He repeated the words with his deep bass voice as if they rose from his heart—  
“Sarah Jarvis! Where is Sarah Jarvis, Ebna Ebonal? Sarah Jarvis!”

The gipsy replied in her mystical way:  
“Ebna Ebonal was born in the Dark Dingle; her journey ends upon the spot where it began.”

Then gyrating her wrinkled finger in the air, working it higher and higher, she made her exit, bowing her head to my mother, and her left hand to the rest of us, the gyrating finger pointing towards the Baronet.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE NAME, THE NAME—SARAH JARVIS—DARK  
DINGLE MEN.

"THAT is an extraordinary woman," said Jerome Givington, as soon as the doors closed behind her; "she has dignity of manner which springs from the elements of her nature, and a grace of movement which patched and coarse garments, and dirty raggedness cannot conceal. I should like to know how she has passed her life. It often strikes me that with a knowledge of three things in relation to any person, a pretty correct biography of all people might be written."

"What are those three things, Jerome,

which comprehend such vitality?" asked my mother.

Sir Leo had shrunk thoughtfully on the sofa when Jerome began speaking, and the singular remark which he made evidently caught his attention, though he showed no disposition to speak. My sister was at some needle-work, my mother gently poked the fire about, and I paid some attention to the lamps, to make more light strike on the material things in the room—so Jerome went on, and answered the question to enlighten our minds." He said—

"They are in a measure generical in character. First, what is the most frequently recurring idea in the mind? Secondly, what is the most important thing the person has witnessed? Thirdly, what is the most important action the person has done of good and evil?"

The Baronet looked at the Curate, and added sorrowfully—

"Quite likely that you could write a life from such scanty, though important mate-

rials, Mr. Givington, but there are not many men who have the moral courage to supply them truthfully. The most frequently recurring idea of my life has been the identity of my child—the most important thing witnessed hitherto has reference to this gipsy, Ebna Ebonal, but what that is, deponent saith not, furthermore ; touching the last particular, who can say what is good, what is evil, in reference to a whole life, before that life has given up its last suspiration ?”

“The last step of life—the last act—may make a person’s existence a ruin or a glory,” said my mother.

“True—true, Mrs. Neville, I leave the subject in your hands to discuss and settle ; I will see you to-morrow. Now I wish you each good night—Good night !”

My mother and sister rose and walked to the hall in courtesy. I moved first to open the door, and as Sir Leo passed, he said—

“The antique place at ten o’clock to-night !”

"Exactly!" I added, and closed the door.

The wind was rising, and had been for some hours, even from sundown, and its roaring in the woods of Timberton came surging through the air like distant thunder, and the roaring of the sea combined.

"Harry, I want you to conduct me to John Wimbush's for half-an-hour," said my mother, as I moved towards my study, "wait, while I put on my garments, and Sara finds something in the shape of refreshments, that poor girl is nearly exhausted beyond doubt. Her errors must be corrected by kindness, and her follies by teaching her better knowledge."

When they were gone to the pantry, Jerome said—

"I think that was rather an extraordinary interview, from which I learn that this gipsy, this Ebna Ebonal—what a singular name it is—has been killing two birds with one fling, in this late journey of hers, for which Sir Leo has so amply supplied the funds. His manner shows that she knows some fact

about this Sarah Jarvis, which suggest something of a clue to the discovery of the lost child. You know more of this matter than your mother. I have no desire to learn anything of this matter, beyond that point where I can be serviceable."

"I know your feeling well, Jerome," I said, "so does Sir Leo; he has a very high opinion of your character as a clergyman, and your judgment as an individual. His disposition to defend the right, and ability also, you seem to have innocently called forth. The lesson will be salutary, I trust, upon the Vicar."

"It seems to me that the gipsy's way of speaking of this girl Eliza being under the roof of John Wimbush—not her father's—that she wished to point his thoughts in that direction. That Sarah Jarvis should have nursed this Chrysacoma Willifer—if she is the Sarah Jarvis Sir Leo wanted to find—is very singular."

"It is—and not the less so the way the gipsy was made acquainted with the fact."

"How was that, Harry? if a fair question, not otherwise."

I said—

"The question's fair enough, but I do not know how to solve the matter, and suspect that it is one of the things which puzzles the Baronet. Why my mother should be so anxious to see this Eliza I do not know. It would be singular if this vain girl should prove the—"

"The Baronet's daughter," exclaimed Jerome.

"No!" I said, "but William Rushworth's and—"

"And what, Harry," added my mother, coming to the door to let me know she was ready, to which I replied, "nothing more than when I have taken you on your mission of mercy, I shall go further in the same pathway on my own account."

As we walked across the green the wind blew fiercely through the Triangle oaks—the old Magi—so that it was not without some difficulty we proceeded, but just as we reached

the stocks in the centre it blew so furiously that my mother was obliged to come to a stand, for it was dead against us. In a few seconds the rushing pulsation passed, and we proceeded as I said—

“It is not easy sailing when wind and tide are against one, and the stars in their courses also, as in the case of Sisera.”

“He who falls in the path of duty manfully struggling on the side of virtue, will be written down—‘good and faithful servant,’ on the scroll of Eternity,” remarked my mother, “whether a prince or peasant—a humble scholar or a baronet, or a lady of title, or a gipsy.”

The Vicar did not so fall in the estimation of Sir Leo, I said—

“Jerome’s fall, however painful, was to rise again like Antæus with increased strength. Do you know the name of Dame Wilson yet?” I asked eagerly, “it is very odd that she has never made Jessie acquainted with it. She has informed me that when the hour comes for our marrying she will reveal it.”



“Well—what more do you require—she is not the less a noble and virtuous woman because she is illegitimate, nor the less likely to make you an excellent wife.”

“Not a bit, my mother,” I added, “but I would sooner learn that Jessie was the daughter of a day labourer—than of one like—like—”

“Like who, Harry?”

“Why, like for instance the Vicar—or any man of his stamp. Dame Wilson, I know, has the same sort of feeling, and begins to doubt whether she can herself speak absolutely about Jessie’s name.”

“How so?” asked my mother hastily, to which I replied—

“Because her brother’s last letter intimated that her sister was married. Do you know how old Amy Rushworth was when she first came to Timberton Vicarage?”

“Oh yes, I remember it very distinctly, the little thing could not be above nine years and a half, she was a light nimble child, but what has this to do with the matter?”

"We must wait and see, mother, for strange things are on the eve of development; you have heard what took place between the Baronet and the Gipsy, and Sarah Jarvis is somebody, and, as I suspect, she knows more about two or three persons of Timberton than they know themselves. Try to learn where Eliza Wimbush was born and who her mother was, and how old she was when John Wimbush brought her here. I think it was to learn these things that Sir Leo was disposed to see this girl to-night. Why the gipsy opposed it, and the way she did so is a mystery, thereby hangs a tale, besides, you know that—but here's the cottage."

"Know what, Harry? say before I see this girl?"

"Jessie Wilson came to Timberton about the same time. It is quite possible that two of the three are lodged in the wrong houses."


"Harry Neville!"

"Yes, mother; I will call for you on my

return," I said, and knocked at the door of the cottage.

The rush, and surge, and roar of the wind, and the creaking of the timber trees, and hissing sounds of the evergreens filled my ears. When I came to the wicket trees I stretched my hands to feel for those men whose hands had fallen on my shoulders at that spot, but I felt the cold trunks of the trees only.

I stood and leaned my arms on the top of the wicket gate. The remembrance of what had taken place so near this spot so recently, the things and circumstances which had united me most intimately with the Baronet, and both of us with Ebna Ebonal in a manner which I could not define nor very clearly trace, and yet which clung about the dearest interests of my life as well as those of Sir Leo Elliott's—the conduct of the Vicar, the moral and domestic condition of my sister Mary in contrast with that of Sara and Jerome Givington, the state of anxiety in which



Jessie Wilson was, and her aunt, the affair of the vain girl Eliza, and the real position of Amy Rushworth, a poor unfortunate young lady, whose life had been crushed up and made a perpetual martyrdom, the true and proper name of my beloved Jessie and her position in relation to the things touched upon by her uncle coming from Jamaica, all conspired to agitate my spirit with the most poignant grief.

I was also haunted with a thought which, despite of myself, made me weep bitterly, and in broken words of agony pour out my emotions, unheeded by the solemn spirit of the rushing wind.

When I parted from Jessie I was thrilled with the sense of unwonted heat in her hand which suggested to me signs of incipient fever. It was with the greatest difficulty that I could refrain from some frantic manifestation of my apprehension.

Moving towards the summer-house, I found Seth and Samuel sitting on the bottom

step, one each side, and leaning on the side wall motionless, like two crouching lions or Roman gladiators, utterly passive, but ready to become rampant in an instant. I said—  
“Dingle men?”

“Oui—oui,” said Seth or Samuel, one or both as usual, in such perfect accord I could not swear which.

“Who is inside?” I asked, but before they had time to reply the door opened, and a flash of fire light through the inside folding doors revealed the figure of a man in black, whose outline had a spectral character; a supernatural indistinctness which, but for the place and circumstances, might easily have been supposed to be a troubled visitant from the realms of death.

## CHAPTER X.

FOUND! FOUND!—COMMISSION EXECUTED.

THE shadowy figure which I saw dimly relieved by the flickering and uncertain light in the antique summer-house was Sir Leo, and a moment after the door closed and I was with him standing before the fire, the only light in the room. As I entered he said, sharply—

“Harry! have you met with the gipsy? Where is she?”

“I have not seen her since she left the Angle House, Sir Leo,” I replied, thoughtfully.

“You are sorrowful, Harry Neville. What

on earth can have so deeply entered into your heart. As Jerome Givington says, astutely—‘What is your most frequently recurring idea?’ Harry Neville, tell me that, and I shall know what makes you sad. I have informed you of that which preoccupies my mind, and fills it with agony. The gipsy should have been here at nine. This suspense is horrible. What does she know of Sarah Jarvis? How did she discover her? Where is she? that’s the key to unlock my heart—to reveal my most frequent recurring idea. Yet it may reveal a degree of anguish in the future which will make life unbearable. The thoughtless encouragement which I gave to the flirtation of this girl Eliza, with the Ensign, recoils on my own heart with frightful agony. What if she should prove my child—my lost child—which I am sure this Ebna Ebonal suspects, and the discovery she has made in the journey after the unfortunate girl so forcibly confirms—the great idea of my life comes upon me

in my old age with maddening intensity. Is it not fearful? Can you faintly realize my feelings, Harry Neville?"

With passionate emotion, I replied—

"My dear Sir Leo, I fully realize them by kindred experience."

"How? It cannot be, Harry Neville. What is it that convulses you in this manner? If we were conspirators we might talk in the dark—ay? The poor fellows at sea have not much time to be sentimental to-night; but let us have the lamps—our lamps burning, and be ready for Ebna Ebonal. What is the sorrow that wrings your spirit?"

"You know, Sir Leo, that Dame Wilson's brother is alive, and on his way to England."

"No! indeed! is it possible? I had not heard of this, but—what then? when did you hear of the fact? where has he been?"

"It is a fact beyond doubt; he returns with a small independency; and he has sent Dame Wilson word that the mother of Jessie



was a married woman, so that she is not what we supposed ; but I suspect and dread she is the daughter of a rascal who abandoned both mother and child, in Jamaica about the year Jessie was born —”

“ Born in Jamaica ?”

“ Dame Wilson fears so ; and I dread the very idea, because—”

“ Because what, Harry ? you have but one listener, unless there be spirits abroad in this gale. Who was that rascal ?”

“ The Vicar of Timberton,” I convulsively articulated, which made the Baronet set the lamp on the table with a jerk, and exclaim—

“ Oh ! that is gall and wormwood—a damning fear. I see—I see the agony into which you are all thrown, and good Dame Wilson having been ruined by the Vicar’s father, aided by the son. It was just after that act of *felo-de-se*, which saved the country the expense of a rope, as she says, that I first met with that fellow. He was capable of any enormity.”

The Baronet's words sent daggers to my heart's core. At that moment it struck me that possibly he knew the real name of Dame Wilson, and without further reflection I asked—

“Did you ever hear the real name of Dame Wilson?”

“Real name of Dame Wilson?” he repeated slowly, every word of which fell like the bomb of a gun from a ship in distress. “Real—name—of—Dame—Wilson? I never had a doubt that Wilson was not her real name. What is her real name?”

“I do not know, Sir Leo; no one knows unless it is—”

“Jessie, I suppose,” he said, reflectingly.

“No, sir; Jessie knows no more than I; and truth told, my mother has advised me to do what is perfectly in unison with my own judgment, and desires—”

“To marry Jessie forthwith; I am glad of it.”

“But this difficulty rose up before us, in

what name she could be married; for her aunt is now in doubt since the receipt of her brother's last letter. Dame Wilson and Jessie have resolved to abide the return to England of Uncle Benjamin." The Baronet several times repeated the name of "Benjamin;" then quickly added, "no one knows unless it is—who?—Harry."

"One who (I said to the aunt) would not tell"—to which she added, "one who dares not," meaning—

"The false hound whom I have chastised with stripes," grumbled indistinctly Sir Leo.

"Benjamin Wilson—no, not Wilson, you say. Where is he coming from to England, Harry?"

Before I could reply, a peculiar whistle, not unlike that of a ball from a rifle, seemed to pass by in the momentary lull of the gale. It caught the ear of Sir Leo, and he opened the doors, and the gipsy entered.

"I am late, Sir Leo."

"I know it." He glanced at the face of the horologe.

"Am I free?"

"You are—Harry Neville is not a stranger!"

"I can trust him with my own secrets if needful, but should not yours without liberty."

"Who has detained you?"

"The mither of the man who has entertained you meanwhile."

"With a relation of his own sorrows, a fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind—"

"And of one family, so Mrs. Neville has just said, beside the bed of Eliza."

"Indeed—indeed! I see—"

"You see nothing in the movements of that good woman, but the workings of love and charity."

"Whoever said otherwise would deserve to have his shoulders and flank waled, until he howled under the stripes, as the Vicar of Timberton has this day."

“Waled the Vicar of Timberton!” the gipsy sung out joyously, twirling and gyrating the fore-fingers of both her hands above her head, with astonishing rapidity, as she added—

“I’ll ha-geed ten years o’ me lif, to ha seed the scabby-hearted hypocrit dance, and heared he howl in unco agonies any-how! —ah—ah—e—e—ha—oh! Waled the Vicar from shoulder to flank—e—he—ah—he—he! Beg your honour’s pardon—the white livered saint shan’t forget it all the born days of Ebna Ebonal, nor the twa lads Seth and Samuel.”

The Baronet, for once, felt that he had in a manner committed himself by so far allowing a domestic and private broil to become known beyond the threshold of the Angle House, and the two principals beyond that place. The deeply-seated abhorrence which the gipsy had towards the Vicar was not calculated upon by the castigator, and it was in vain that he afterwards tried to induce her

to give him her word that she would make no use of the stray words. All that he could extort from her was, that she would use the fact in a way which nobody should understand but the Vicar himself.

“You left Mrs. Neville with this Eliza Wimbush?” remarked Sir Leo, returning to the subject. “Where did you find her—and under what circumstances?”

She rejoined :—

“She rode by coach the direct road to Plymouth, so that we could not gain upon her movements. When she found that her false lover had sailed two days before she reached Plymouth, the folly of her conduct fell blankly upon her heart. Weary and faint—sick at heart—crushed with disappointment—two hundred miles or more from home, and but a few shillings in her purse—utter ruin, madness, or death, encompassed her round about, and but for your promptitude and charity, instead of being now in the cottage of John Wimbush, with an angel


lady sitting beside her, she might have been,—the Great Spirit knows where. What more—what more—she departed—she has returned, and nobody in Timberton knows but her real friends. Here my journey began; here it ends. • What more?”

“You came back through Southampton?” inquired Sir Leo.

“I am free.”

“You are free, Ebna Ebonal. Who did you find in Southampton?”

“I found nobody, because I did not go there. I found what I sought at Plymouth. To find your game, Seth and Samuel, with the wisdom of serpents and agility of fallow deer, hunted Plymouth in a way which none but the like of them know how. They have hunted for eating—never for sale—a little of your honour’s ancestral game of another kind ere now—may perhaps again—no matter: they found her form, and Ebna Ebonal caught her by the ears. I found her at a respectable Inn and



lodging house, and when I called, she was gone heart-broken to bed. I ordered some supper and grog, and sat down to consume them nigh to the seat of the landlady, while the lads joined the company to smoke their pipes, and tell tales to make the company laugh. 'Mayhap,' I said to the landlady, 'you could let a poor woman have a bed here to night, who has the money to pay?' "

" 'I don't know exactly, mistress; you are, I think, a stranger in these parts—ah?'

" 'Yes—yes! I was here twenty years last Candlemas for awhile; but places look changed since then.'

" 'Have you travelled far?'

" 'Oh, ay! I have been in all parts of England, but more about Leicestershire, Derby, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, Gloucester, Worcestershire, and Buckinghamshire. I know every town and place in these counties and Oxfordshire.'

" 'Do you know Oxford well?'



“ ‘Every town and village, and nobleman’s seat, from Henley-on-Thames to Banbury-on-the-Cherwell.’ I said, ‘Excuse me, ma’am, but I think I have seen you before, perhaps in Oxfordshire. I have been for years and years at all the feasts and wakes and statutes and fairs and mops in that county.’

“ ‘I think not,’ she said, ‘I never was there but once in my life, and that is well nigh twenty years ago. I went through Oxford and saw the Oxford scholars and colleges ; then through a town called Drunken Deddington, on what they called their Puddin-pie Fair day. Then through a town notified for cakes—Banbury Cakes.’

“ ‘Ay, sure,’ I said, ‘everybody has heard of Banbury,—

Ride a cock horse to Banbury Cross,  
To see a fine lady ride on a white horse  
Rings on her fingers, bells on her toes,  
So she makes music wherever she goes.

Did you travel through any other town ?’ I said.

“ ‘Through a few small villages ; and so on

to a beautiful but out of the way place—perhaps you know it—called Timberton.’

“Ay, sure, ma’am,’ I said, ‘I know it well; and all the old folks in it. The young ones, some of them, have grown out of my knowledge, I dare say. I shall be after travelling that part soon.’

“‘You want a bed, you say, to-night; well, I dare say I can accommodate you in a back room; but it’s double-bedded, and a young woman is in one.’ She lowered her voice to a whisper, and added—

“‘By-the-bye, this young girl has come all the way from B—— by coach after a young officer, who has just sailed with the regiment for India; the poor thing is half mad, and all her money is gone but a few shillings. God a’ Mighty knows what will become of her. She looks like a respectable person’s daughter. Maybe, you know some of her friends. I should not like to see any mother’s daughter come to ruin, and I don’t know what to do in the matter.’

“ ‘Do you know her name?’ I asked.

“ ‘She has told me.’

“ ‘I thought so, ma’am; and maybe she said it was Eliza Wimbush. I’ll tell you, ma’am, what to do in the matter. I came here to save her from ruin; and will pay you all that she has cost.’

“ ‘The landlady looked a little surprised; but not so much as a person who had never known such things before, as I said—‘You have experienced such things before, I reckon, as young girls running after soldiers? It’s a long way to Timberton?’

“ ‘You are right; really it’s quite wonderful that this should have come about, after twenty years, that a young thoughtless girl should come all the way from that place of Timberton to lodge in my house, and especially if you did but know what a strange circumstance took me to that place, but as you have finished supper, I’ll go and see if she is asleep, and tell her that the other bed must be occupied by an old lady.’

“She was not gone many seconds, and in a few more I sat on the side of her bed, talking in a full voice to the landlady to awaken the sleeper by degrees. ‘Oh, this bed will do for me very well, ma’am. She seems like a girl of twenty, poor creature ; no doubt her friends are dying for grief.’ Eliza opened her eyes and looked at the landlady, who held the candle. I continued ‘poor girl, she must be restored to her friends ; upon my word, I know who, she belongs to ; why, what, Eliza Wimbush is it you ? Oh, fie, you naughty girl, you have come here all the way after Captain Willifer.’

“‘Oh Lord,’ she cried out, rising up in bed, ‘it’s Ebna Ebonal.’

“‘Just so, you foolish girl, to be after following young officers who are here and there and never anywhere when they are wanted, unless in battle. I am come to save you from ruin anyhow ; and you will coach it with me back to Timberton to-morrow and

the next day, for Captain Leo Elliott will pay all—all.'

"'Captain Leo Elliott !' exclaimed the woman in astonishment, as she sat down with the candle in her hand, ' how strange—does he live at Timberton, a sea captain was he ? '

"'Yes; but this officer Willifer—'

"'Willifer ! ' she exclaimed again, ' upon my soul, I knew both of them ; I lived in Cheltenham once, and was paid by one Captain Leo Elliott, to nurse a Miss Willifer at her confinement. Well, to be sure, how uncommonly odd and strange that this young lady should run away from home after a boy I nursed for six months. If it is the same, he was christened, for I was at the christening ; and had ' bove two pounds.' I remember he was christened George Willifer Elliott, and—'

"'Oh, no doubt you are right,' I said, ' how pleasant all this is. I am sure Sir Leo, for

he is a nobleman now, I am sure he will make you a present; for he's as good hearted a Jack Tar as he was before he was a Baronet, and he has supplied me with the means to fetch this naughty girl home again.'

" 'Only to think, and that boy is just gone off to India—a captain, too, his mother's name was the strangest I ever knew—it was Chrysacoma. They used to say she was the prettiest girl in Cheltenham, and if she had not died that Captain Leo Elliott would have married her. He's done a good part by the child then.'

" 'Yes, yes, a very good part;' I added, 'and will do a good part by this depend on it.'

" 'I never could find out what part Captain Leo Elliott came from; but my husband said, he saw in the paper that one Sir Langton Elliott was dead at Timberton, and he and I wondered if it was any of Captain Leo's family.'

" 'Sir Langton was his elder brother, so

he's now come to the title and estates. Then you did not go there—to Timberton, I mean—on his account ?

“ Oh, no ; I lived at Cheltenham. Ten years after I married and settled here. I never knew anything about them after they left. Will you have a basin of nice gruel made, my young lady ; I am uncommon glad some one is come after you, who knowed how to find you out ; and now, I see all about it—they two young chaps, who came here this afternoon, and looked about as if they wanted to fork off something—they are in the kitchen now—are your sons ? You are gipsy people, and know everybody and every place ; you see, you go about country so much. You must know, you know, that I don't profess to know anything about religion ; but seeing this here lady in such distress, you know, I fetched a little Bible out of my husband's chest of drawers, thinking as she would sit up stairs here without fire, she might be comforted by reading

the Psalms. Did you read a bit? will you have a little brandy and water warm, and a bit of toast?’

“‘Yes, yes,’ I said, ‘fetch her some up, she is faint and exhausted—but stop—just to show you that we shan’t run away without paying before you are up; here, take this sovereign to pay expenses, and we can make a settling after breakfast.’

“‘Oh, no, no; I know all’s right from what has been talked about, but—if you wish it—but just as you please, it’s no difference, I shan’t charge you a sixpence more; my husband won’t have anything not respectable at the Tawny Lion of Timbuctoo. It’s very odd, but since we have lived here, I have never heard the sign mentioned without thinking of the Red Lion of Timberton, where I slept one night—the sound of the name makes it, I suppose.’

“‘And the circumstance which took you there helped, I dare say, for it was something strange?’



“ ‘A little, not much. I’ll fetch you some refreshment up ; should you like a boiled egg?’

“She took the sovereign and went down, when I assured Eliza Wimbush that nobody would know about her folly but her friends and that they would take care of her if she would return, and she consented.

I took up the Bible Book, and by accident-like, looked to see if the name of the landlady was written therein, when I saw the following—

‘From your affectionate sister—Timberton,’ some words being scratched out. Eliza Wimbush had not opened the Book. When the woman returned, I said, ‘I should like to buy this Bible Book ; what will you sell it for?’ when she said—

“ ‘Oh, indeed—why? what do you gipsies want of Bible Books? I’ve heard say, you get hold of them to help make magic spells to be-fool folks ; I’ll not part with it for that purpose, for all the world ; besides, it is a favourite of my husband’s. It was given him by his old aunt, for me to take with me to—’

“‘Ay, ay, I know,’ I said, to stop her words, for I did not want the girl to know what she was going to say. She took my hint; but I thought she blushed a little, so I found a chance to say before I went to bed—

“‘I did not want you to let this girl know that you had ever been to Timberton: for it struck me just then, that that Bible Book was once her mother’s!’

“‘Well, to be sure, how odd and strange it is; but I saw a mark on her which gave me such a turn, just as if my flesh shivered, for I feel sure that I suckled that young lady when she was first born up to the time she was weaned.’

“‘No telling,’ says I, ‘for it’s odd that I should have found the nurse of Captain Willifer, a gentleman I know as well as my own sons almost. You know, then, the mother of this foolish girl—who was she?’

“Her husband came behind me without my seeing him, and he heard my question, and said sharply—

“ ‘You knows nothing about it, so the old lady need not quiz you. Two hot gins, one cold brandy; good company in the parlour to-night; make haste, wife. So you came all the way from Timberton after this fair one, ay, mother; and found her safe and sound, and asleep, with both hands.’

“ ‘When he was gone off with his glasses I said, ‘I never knew her mother, but I know all about her father.’

“ ‘I know nothing about that; I dare say I am wrong. What time shall you start off in the morning?’

“ ‘Oh, not till after nine or ten o’clock.’ I could get nothing out of her after the words of her husband; but I had found more than I bargained for, anyhow. We started back by coach. Eliza is under the roof of John Wim-bush—that woman’s name is Sarah Jarvis.”

“ ‘Sarah Jarvis,’ articulated Sir Leo, slowly. “ ‘I must think of all this, Ebna Ebonal.’

“ ‘And to-morrow I will tell you my future plans; but your honour forgets that the lads

are being skinned with the wind, and empty bellies, too, and their mither is a-weary."


"No, not forgotten; see—I have again provided for supper; call them in, and you can refresh yourselves, and, if you like, sleep here before the fire till morning. Here is an extra bottle for you after supper. There are worse places than this for lords' sons at sea, let me tell you. Come, Harry." He opened the doors, and in a moment at call, Seth and Samuel entered, and bowed low, but not servilely, but spake not. "I'll see you to-morrow at twelve, Harry. I'll see you again after supper, Ebna Ebonal." We parted at the bottom of the steps, and as Sir Leo walked off I heard him mutter, "Sarah Jarvis—at last."

I called for my mother, and soon reached the Angle House.

## CHAPTER XI.

FEVER! FEVER!---WHO KNOWS HOW TO NURSE  
THE AFFLICTED.

THE consultation at the antique Summer-house the next day took place at twelve o'clock as appointed; but resulted in no new feature of the case in question, beyond the fact that Sir Leo was perfectly satisfied that the "Bible Book" once belonged to his angel wife, and that the woman at the Tawny Lion of Timbuctoo was the very Sarah Jarvis he had in vain searched for nineteen years before. One important step he resolved to take, namely, to visit Plymouth himself and take his own way to find out all the particulars that he required.



The castigation of the Vicar sent him away from the Angle House for ever, and all communication between my sisters, and Mary and her mother, was by letter, or accidental meeting in the streets or fields when out for a walk.

The next day that troublesome girl was seen, as usual, here and there about the village; she had half an hour's flirtation with a young farmer, who once was very sweet in his attentions, the influence of her rolling eyes and rosy lips had no influence on his judgment, for he coolly told her she had better get a full private soldier to marry her now she had lost her fine officer. A few doors from John Wimbush's cottage there lived the village tailor, who had indulged a soft passion for Eliza, but she had from time to time flattered his hopes and recklessly flirted with his affection until he had given up, as he expressed it—"All thought and desire also, to take to his bosom such a soulless butterfly," and as the words fell from his lips he would

“sigh like a furnace,” and miss a few stitches in his work. Jonathan Dutch, for that was his name, never suffered the dashing flirt to pass his window without looking after her as far as his vision reached, and whenever she called in to talk with his mother, as a neighbour, Jonathan’s heart was as attentive as his ear, and both were, despite of himself, more interested than he would have admitted.

To carry out the idea which had been suggested to her, to show herself about the village as if she had not been from it for ten days, she called to see Mrs. Dutch and torment Jonathan, her son, and she was so full of pleasant rattling talk, gossip and fun with him, that he felt he could forgive her high notions if she would promise to be faithful in future. To his surprise and joy also she told him point blank that she loved him as much as ever she did, at which his heart leaped up and his body also, for she informed my mother that, he jumped off his

shop board and sealed his forgiveness and love anew with a hearty kiss.

My mother was especially anxious to save the reputation of this vain but simple-minded girl, and she succeeded without any difficulty in enlisting Dame Wilson in the same laudable purpose, nor need it be stated that the Curate co-operated with all his might in the same work.

It was decided at the Angle House that the best way was to hedge her round with influences which would control her words and actions, and thereby correct the errors of her understanding; for we were certain that there was no particular love of vice in her nature. To this end, Jerome Givington and my mother settled that she should become an inmate of the Angle House, in the capacity of nursemaid, fair wages being offered as an additional inducement to those prudential considerations which were laid before her. The matter was finally settled the same day, and, on the morrow, Eliza Wimbush was surrounded by



domestic circumstances, which materially influenced her future life.

Before a week had passed, a new condition presented itself, which changed the seemingly permanent arrangement, and threw all the people at the house into a state of fear and trembling, and myself into an agony of despair which I now, after the lapse of many years, think of with bated breath. The suspicion which had crossed my mind respecting the peculiarity in the manner of Jessie Wilson's voice, and the burning heat of her hand, was too true. She was, with wondrous speed, laid prostrate with fever.

When it became apparent, our anxiety had no bounds ; we were almost driven to despair. Jessie's life depended upon the calm and intelligent attention which was paid to her in the form of nursing ; for the very best medical advice is too often defeated by ignorance of those who have the charge of the patient in the absence of the doctor.

Dame Wilson was inconsolable, and, as

she had the highest possible confidence in the wisdom and goodness of my mother, she yielded the management of the sick chamber to her, and the dear treasure which lay there in a state of insensibility. On the morning when the doctor was called, and had stopped at the Angle House a minute to report the state in which he found the sufferer, my mother said, "I shall go and nurse the dear child myself; nor shall I return home until she is out of all danger."

This serious calamity had a direct influence on the condition of Eliza, for the management of the shop had, in a great measure, rested on Jessie; so that she was at once removed from her post as nursemaid to be general shop-woman in the place of Jessie Wilson, and her ability was of that kind which well qualified her for the work. The supervision was taken by one who could do any human labour for the well-being of either the niece or aunt. The sensation through Timberton was of an exciting character.

When Sir Leo called at the shop for his supply of cigars, not having been there for three days, owing to the presence of gentry at the Mansion on business, and not having heard that Jessie's cold had ended in a case of fever, he was taken by surprise to find the person behind the counter, whose conduct and identity was then wringing him with moral agony. Fortunately, I happened to be nigh at hand to explain how matters had conspired fortunately for Eliza Wimbush, though they were so terrible to all the rest of us. The noble-hearted man, who had fought many hard battles, and faced death and slaughter at the cannon's mouth, without a sense of fear or trembling, now shook with his emotions until his brown sea-beaten face was blanched ; and he turned aside to wipe his eyes, as I did mine.

“Anything and everything you want, that can be had at the Mansion—have it. That's enough, Harry, tell your good mother—God bless her. Ask if I can see the dear lady for

a moment. If she is sensible, I shall like to see her; and if the poor thing is not, I shan't disturb her."

I said, more as stating a fact than by way of caution—

"The doctor and my mother both say it is a decided case of typhus fever."

He looked at me a moment, as if to weigh my words with my expression, and then said calmly and tenderly—

"If her fever were as contagious as a panic and as malignant as death, I would take her in my arms to sleep on my bosom, if doing so would hasten her recovery. Do you think I am afraid of fever?—a moral and domestic coward! Let me tell you, Harry, that the best way to judge a man's character, is to understand how he acts to those who are afflicted, more especially in his own household. Show me the way up-stairs, I am sure your mother will admit me to see my highly esteemed and beloved friend."

I led him up-stairs, and as we approached the door of her chamber, which was open, we heard her talking to the phantoms of her own brain—delirious, but yet in a great measure coherent.

“The Vicar never did like us, aunt—how strange it is, we have never wronged or insulted him. How could I tell Harry my name, if I did not know it?—so nothing shall be done until uncle Benja—ah—ah it is not so, upon my word, I’ll bet you Captain Leo, I will, my most curious piece of antique art, which will make the Angle House, yes, make the Angle House perfect, to—to a wooden pap-spoon—a spoon; oh! who’s that, Mrs. Neville?—is it my uncle Benjamin, Harry?—ay—oh, dear me, it’s—it’s Captain Leo.”

“God bless you, my child! How do you feel now? have you been sleeping a little?”

He took hold of her hand gently, and first kissed it, and then her lips also, adding—

"I am sorry to see you so ill, but Mrs. Neville will soon nurse you back to health, I think."

"Well, it may be so, I—I am very hot and very faint, Captain Leo; I dreamed about you last night, but I forget what. Give me some water?"

The Baronet held the glass to her lips, and she drank a long draught, and then continued—

"Oh, I forget what after all, but I won a pap-spoon somehow. What time is it, I wonder, on the dial plate of eternity? I won't believe Uncle Benjamin, if he swears anybody was my father. I was created, I was before all worlds, oh, oh!"

She sank again into a dreamy state of quiet, and lay as motionless as a corpse, so after a few seconds' contemplation of her face, the Baronet left the room in silence.

When we again reached the shop, no one was there, but the girl Eliza, who was ready to wait upon him, but he stood irresolute, as

if he did not know what he wanted, and required Jessie to tell him ; or, it might be, he was speculating about what Ebna Ebonal had reported respecting Sarah Jarvis, meanwhile eyed the person before him, as if to see if he could discover any mark about the face or neck, to justify her in swearing to the fact of her identity. He might be thinking of other things—I cannot say, but this I do know, he stood speechless, looking Eliza Wimbush in the face, until she seemed almost petrified with fear and wonder. At last he said gently—

“Do you remember your mother, my damsel?”

“No, Sir Leo—she died when I was an infant.”

“Who told you so?”

“My father and my aunt.”

“What is your aunt’s name?”

“Betsy Wimbush, Sir Leo.”

“Oh! your father’s sister. Had your mother any sisters?”

"Not that I ever knew—but I will ask my father, if you should like to know."

"Oh, no, no—don't trouble! Fill this case with cigars. What was your mother's name?—her maiden name I mean."

"Her maiden name—well! upon my soul, Sir Leo, I don't know, and nobody knows besides my father, and he never speaks about it, nor tells any-body who asks him. I told him last week, it was just as if he was ashamed of my mother. My father has quite a queer way with him about the matter. Do you, Sir Leo, want anything beside the cigars?"

"No, no, only that you will be a good girl and learn to do what Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Neville advise you. You may depend upon it that if you do so, it will be of more value through life than all that will ever come to you from your mother's friends. You are now in a most respectable position, I counsel you to keep it; depend upon it, I shall have my eyes upon you, and if



you behave yourself well, and leave off your foolish and giddy flirtations, I shall see that you will not want friends in your future life. If it had not been for good Mrs. Neville you might, and most likely would have been at this moment in the greatest misery. If you want good advice at any time, look to Mrs. Neville or Mrs. Wilson or Mr. Givington, who will tell you what steps you ought to take under all circumstances. Well, well—I did not mean to make you weep, but all the better, I trust they are tears of true-hearted resolve to be a wiser and a better girl in future. I shall hope to see you go on in your new and improved position in a manner which will secure my approbation.”

The hitherto vain and foolish girl wept and sobbed bitterly, and buried her face in her handkerchief and staggered out of the shop into the garden to conceal her convulsive grief and contrition. When she was gone, he said—

“That is not a bad nature, but a light and

volatile one, which has been badly trained or rather not trained at all, or where trained, trained in a wrong direction : I think the improvement of her position will quicken her self-respect. Oh, it's a terrible state, but I am determined to know the whole truth, to face the disastrous consequences, for they have not been produced by crime of any kind, but by Providence, or that state of things over which mortals have no control. If my child has been lost without my knowledge and could not be found though all human exertion and skill were used, and if the dear innocent has been thus placed in poverty and surrounded by neglect, shall I shrink from discharging the duties of a father because of the presence of folly and ignorance and poverty, or even of those vices which are incident to all of them ? No, Harry Neville, may my right hand forget how to hold a cigar and its smoke choke me when I do. Speak kindly to that poor Eliza. I shall come up again in the evening."

## CHAPTER XII.

UNCLE BENJAMIN'S RETURN—SAVED !  
SAVED !

DAY after day Sir Leo Elliott came to inquire after Jessie, now parched in fever and bewildered in mind and all distraught lying at the very door of death. Days of misery and nights of agony followed each other, and all the affairs of life seemed to me as nothing while the light of my soul was hovering between life and death.

In this state three weeks passed by, and still no hope, only the hope that while life lasts hope will linger.

The Baronet's physician from N—— came

every other day, and for a week every day, but in all cases corroborated the opinion and endorsed the practice of our Edgcombe surgeon.


There was something truly sublime in the sorrow and dignified resignation of Dame Wilson. All her affections had been centred in her niece, for her welfare she had toiled and striven year after year, and no purpose ever entered her heart which was not mainly fashioned by her love and duty toward an object which now in her old age seemed passing from her eyes for ever. Oh, it was heart-rending to witness the scenes of agony which from time to time convulsed our spirits. Amidst all our agitation our agony and maddening despair there was one mind which had been disciplined in affliction which had been sanctified by a spiritual baptism in which no theological cant had any place, one who had been tried and, purified, whose affections were principles, and whose wisdom was virtue : that mind was

at once calm and watchful and intelligent, and no convulsions of grief were suffered to disturb her spirit, no delirious ravings of her patient agitated her soft and gentle hand, and no night watchings dimmed the lustre of her benevolent eyes. My mother's hand was soft as an angel's, her eye as watchful as an eagle's, and her heart as calm as those who know they trust in God.

The fourth week passed by in which every day, several hours came and went while we were unable to say whether the next minute would or would not be her last.

At this juncture a letter arrived to say that the long absent brother and uncle had reached England, and would be at Timberton in a few days. The Mansion was again quiet. The vain and flirting Eliza had become a sadder and wiser woman ; results soon proved that she was every way a better one.

A veil must be drawn over the scene, which occurred when Dame Wilson's head fell on the bosom of her brother, and his on her



shoulder, while they blended their love, their sorrow, and their tears. That day the physician, the surgeon, and the nurse, my mother, if last not least, pronounced the terrible crisis past ; that the powers of nature were surging back to life.

Oh, it was inexpressible agony of joy to hear the faintest word of hope ; yet though so feeble its influence thrilled every heart. One seemed to remain unmoved ; and on that person everything seemed to rest. It was humanly speaking, our anchor and our hope. No convulsion, nay, no agitation of feeling was allowed for a moment in that chamber of affliction to disturb the current of life in its flutterings, its ebbings and flowings round about the cistern of existence. My mother peremptorily prohibited all mention to Jessie, of the arrival of her uncle until she deemed proper. As no person but her aunt and the old servant Ruth, and sometimes myself was to be admitted into the room for at least a week ; Sir Leo resolved to pay a visit to

Plymouth, to see what he could discover at the Tawny Lion of Timbuctoo, and from the veritable Sarah Jarvis, who had for years become a sort of mythical personage in his imagination. In this step he resolved to be accompanied by Ebna Ebonal, for reasons which were known to them alone. This movement being determined, had to be carried out by the gipsy's disguising herself, which was achieved by her skill, and a full supply of ladies' clothes from the Mansion. The change in personal appearance was so great to all superficial observers, and even to pretty shrewd ones, that it almost amounted to a complete metamorphosis.

She made a call at the shop, and Eliza Wim-bush waited upon her without the slightest suspicion that she was her old friend and agent of deliverance from sorrow and ruin. I should have been also equally deceived perhaps if she had been so disposed.

As she passed out of the shop she slightly gyrated her wrinkled, though now delicately-

gloved fore-finger, and said with bated breath—

“One of two in this house.”

The words took possession of my mind; and “One of two in this house” was passing through my thoughts continually.

As it was absolutely necessary that the house should be kept perfectly still, and all knowledge of the arrival of her uncle kept from Jessie, as well as for other prudential considerations, Mr. Wilson was a guest at the Angle House. His sister had given him reasons of a satisfactory kind why he should assume her *alias* for a season, and he did thoroughly, in all outward signs before his coming, for all his luggage was labelled Mr. B. Wilson.

Jerome Givington and I found him a most intelligent gentleman—a masculine edition of the dignified Dame.

If he had been a less calmly dispassionate man—less reflective or more hasty in his



speech, he would more than once have committed himself in our free, frank and friendly intercourse.

There was a dignified calmness in his deportment which indicated latent power of intellect and heart. It was, however, quite apparent to us that the name of William Rushworth disturbed his equanimity to its very centre, fully justifying all that Dame Wilson had revealed of the Vicar's character in days past, and of his father likewise.

Nine days had passed over since Sir Leo left for Plymouth, and the slow, but sure progress of returning strength brought my dear Jessie to a state of consciousness of her physical weakness, and in part of what she had passed through. Still so faintly flowed the tide of life that the most watchful and skilful attention was required to ward off everything calculated to excite or agitate her fluttering powers of mind and body.

She frequently expressed a desire to see me, but my prudent mother over-ruled it, day

after day, by the most consummate skill; but when the desire in her mind began to disturb her rest from the apprehension that some evil had befallen me, I had the exquisite joy and agony of again seeing and kissing her dear lips. I resolutely determined to be calm and succeeded.

The next day, just as we were sitting down to dinner, about two o'clock, at the Angle House, Mr. Benjamin Wilson, Jerome, my sister, and myself—we were startled by the Baronet's carriage and four grey horses dashing across the Green. Jerome exclaimed, "It is the Baronet," and rushed to the window. "It's Sir Leo," I exclaimed, and made for the hall door, perfectly sure he was coming to our house. Our guest, somewhat surprised at our enthusiasm, followed Jerome to the window for the moment, thinking that we moved merely to look at the carriage and four horses—but when the old coachman in livery, with a footman behind, came wheeling round to the garden gate of the Angle House, a con-

siderable fluttering took possession of his calm nature.

A moment sufficed for the footman to open the carriage door, when Dame Wilson's brother saw the proprietor of Timberton and Edgecombe, step out and seize the hand of the man who was about to marry the niece of the lady shopkeeper. A moment after the carriage and horses re-crossed the Green, while Sir Leo Elliott walked into the room and with the frankness of a seaman and the grace of an accomplished gentleman offered Mr. Benjamin Wilson his hand, saying—

“Sir, I am very pleased to meet you, very glad you are safely arrived at Timberton, I beg you will be seated. I very highly esteem your noble-minded sister and your—your—dear suffering niece, God bless her. Pray, gentlemen, pardon my weakness, I hope the dear child is better to-day, Harry?”

“Yes Sir Leo,” I said, with emotion.

“I am glad of it, come let us have dinner. I am again in the way of fortune, Mr.—ah

ah—Mr. Wilson take this seat, you see I make myself at home here, like a true seaman, any port in a storm. Mr. Givington, say grace, if you please, and let us begin ; where is Mrs. Givington, oh, here you are ; I am glad to see you.”

Mr. Wilson soon recovered his surprise and with friendly talk we proceeded with the dinner. We talked of Jamaica. There was but one way for me to understand the Baronet's conduct.

## CHAPTER XIII:

THE SYMBOLIC KNOCKER OF THE ANGLE HOUSE  
—NATIVITY TOM—IT WILL DRIVE ME MAD.

THE next morning, which was a warm but breezy first of March, I heard Sir Leo pounding at the hall door before I was downstairs. I threw up the window and spoke to him from above, and the glance of a moment sufficed to satisfy me that the peculiar excitement of the previous afternoon and evening had not subsided. I hastened down, and in doing so met Mr. Benjamin Wilson on the landing so that we met the Baronet together in the hall. There was no change in his frank and affable manner of addressing the long lost brother of

Dame Wilson. He said after the preliminary inquiries about sleeping and feeling and the state of the atmosphere—

“I have heard from Eliza this morning that dear Jessie has slept well, and that she and your good mother, God bless them, were still fast asleep.

‘Oh! sleep it is a blessed thing,  
Beloved from pole to pole.’”

He burst into a fine strain, singing the words of Coleridge to a tune extemporized at the moment out of his own joyous heart. The sound of his voice was exquisitely sweet, and our guest from time to time eyed the singer with mingled delight and surprise. While he was singing Jerome Givington came down, when the Baronet suddenly stopped, and said—

“Good morning, Curate, you find I have disturbed you with my morning hymn, a bit from the bright-eyed ancient mariner; now let us have a verse or two of the orthodox matin melody just to show our Jamaica friend

that we know how to be pious without hypocrisy, and reverent without wretchedness of feeling—

‘Awake my soul and with the sun.’”

When we had finished our spontaneous matin song, the Baronet remarked—

“Gentlemen, as I have a leisure day I shall be pleased to see you and our Jamaica friend at the Mansion to dinner. Ay, have you any other engagement?—none—well, then, come down about eleven o’clock and we will have a stroll round the grounds, it will be a fine day and give us an appetite.”

We made the engagement, and as he departed his eye fell upon the old heavy oak-door, so he stopped and most minutely examined it. He did so without speaking, while we of the Angle House stood round in silence, waiting the result of his inspection. He then looked at me keenly, and asked—

“Do you know why this solid oak door has this particular part of it counter sunk in this singular manner?”

"No, Sir Leo," I replied, "but I suspect that originally there was a knocker which filled all the space, and fitted into these sections of circles and angles. It must have been held on with pins and screw-nuts, for you see these bits of wood are of a different age, the pin-holes have been filled up after the knocker or ornament or device of some kind was taken away. The account left in manuscript respecting the Angle House, collected and written by my father, suggests that it was a 'symbolic knocker,' the MS. in one instance, calls it, 'the Angle House Symbolical Treasure.'"

"Indeed! I never heard your mother speak about anything of the kind. I should like to see the document. Have you it handy?"

"It is under the custody of my mother, and I believe no living eye but her own and mine ever read it. It is a singular narrative or history of the House, and the singular man who built it."

"I should like to see it exceedingly. I



must read it, Harry ; the perusal will be invaluable to me, for I must tell our friend that I am writing the lives of my ancestors to fill up time, and as a legacy to the next of kin, heigho, oh, oh ; the next of kin."

He elevated his voice, as if thrilled with some new emotion. I pointed to the place where the "Angle House Symbolical Treasure," had been, and said—

"The man who designed this house was an Æther fire-worshipper, and the foundation walls make a Taaudic Cross—the Divine symbol invented by the great Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus."

"Nothing more likely. I must see the work ; I find that that ancestor of mine was called in his day and generation, 'The Astrological Philosopher,' by the 'topping folks' of Timberton and Edgecombe, but the common people called him 'Nativity Tom.'"

I said—

"There are some anecdotes in my father's manuscript about your great great-grand-

father, 'Nativity Tom,' which are very curious, Sir Leo."

"I must see the work, Harry. Ask your mother to lend it me? and bring it with you. By-the-bye, do you know, have you found out what that dear suffering child, Jessie, means by her curious piece of antique art, about which she offered to wager against my secret. It struck me this morning, it's the very thing, which a hundred and fifty years ago, was taken or stolen from this door!"

I informed him that she had promised never to let me see it, until a certain day, when she would add it to the Angle House, and make it more perfect than I had ever seen it.

"She means what she says, Sir Leo."

"I know it—I know it! This dear niece of yours, Mr. Wilson, is a very remarkable woman—an accomplished lady. Oh, sir, you cannot well believe how much she is beloved in Timberton, she is as beautiful as the sweetest of June days, and as good as she is

beautiful. I have seen her, talked with her, watched her daily for years, until it has become a part of my every-day life, to go to the shop of your noble-minded sister, to buy cigars, and talk with the gay-hearted, sober-minded, and intelligent Jessie Wilson. By my 'body and breeches !' I would sooner lose Edgecombe estate, and all the bones of the dead Elliott's in the church vaults, than I would Jessie Wilson !—Jessie !—your dear niece Jessie !”

“ It gives me unspeakable happiness to find my sister and niece so highly respected—and—and loved by such worthy people,” said Mr. Wilson. “ I can scarcely control my emotions. Your kindness, Sir Leo, to my sister—”

“ Need not be talked about, my good sir ; besides, you see from the nature of things, it is a matter of belief—mainly of opinion ; why, sir, you know motives make actions good or evil ; to be sure, you nod assent ; hence you see—interest—rubs the guilt off our so-

called good actions; 'anyhow,' as an old gipsy friend of ours expressed herself. Well, Ralph, how is the Rector this morning?"

This question was addressed to the Rector's man-servant, who just then came through the garden gate.

"Please, Sir Leo, the Rector is taken much worse this morning, and the doctor says he cannot live long. He wants to see Mr. Givington directly, if you will please come down with me; I was to wait for you, sir."

"Poor man, poor man. He is of a great age, Mr. Wilson, over eighty three or four years I should say. He was Rector when I was a saucy boy of ten years; I used to go down to be drilled in Latin syntax along with my poor brother Langton just dead. Dear me, how time passes—and we pass with it. I hope your master has made his will before this, Ralph?"

"He has it all ready made, Sir Leo; it only wants Mr. Givington to sign it, as a witness."

Jerome had only to put his hat on to be ready to start, and in a minute, he wished the Baronet good morning, and was on his way to the Rectory.

"If that man had been called to the poorest cottage in Edgecombe, Mr. Wilson, he would have obeyed the call as promptly as this to the Rectory."

"I am very glad to hear you say so. I have as profound a reverence for the clergyman who honestly discharges the duties of his function, as I have contempt for the clergyman who does not."

"You are just in that, Mr. Wilson; At eleven o'clock—mind—good morning—good morning."

"Your friend the Baronet is a character and no mistake, Mr. Neville," said Mr. Wilson, as we stood looking after him, and observed what volumes of smoke he puffed out. "He's a fierce smoker; but I think I could beat him, if that is his best."

"If I were disposed to wager, I should bet

against you, sir. If you can beat him in smoking, you will be a hero in his opinion for life. When we are walking round the Park, you can show your proficiency in that way. I never smoke; it is a vice too expensive for me to patronize."

"It is a vice, no doubt, Mr. Neville, like all habits which have gained a mastery over us. We become slaves, and therefore vicious. The general prevalence of the vice does not destroy its real character—though in public opinion its face is disguised by the sophistications cast over it by enslaved *devotees*."

As we turned into the house to breakfast, for my sister was waiting, I added—"Your precepts are slightly out of keeping with your practice according to your confessions—or rather professions."

"Very true, Mr. Neville; I am in some points a strange contradiction—a discord—out of harmony with myself. Good morning, Mrs. Givington—I am afraid we have kept you waiting."

My sister acknowledged the courtesy, and inquired where Jerome was gone, and on being informed, she proceeded with the breakfast, saying—

“You have had quite a concert this morning, Harry! Depend upon it, Sir Leo has some new fancy. I should not be surprised, if he has made some funny discovery while he has been away from Timberton, about the famous society.”

“What is to be the name and nature of the society, Mrs. Givington, to which you refer?” asked Mr. Wilson.

“Ob, dear, sir; I am not able to tell you—I am not in the secrets of the knowing ones—you must ask my brother. Your dear niece, poor thing, just before she was taken with fever, said she would stand godmother to the society, if they would engage a very celebrated gipsy fortune-teller in this neighbourhood to give the first lecture about ‘Who’s who, and what’s what.’ She said—ah me, it was the very last time she was at

the Angle House—she said, it was to be christened ‘The Timbertonian and Edgecombites’ Literary, Scientific, Philosophical, Antiquarian, and Boobyistical Institution.”

“What would the Baronet say to her, if he knew that she spoke in this manner about his intentions?”

“Say to her if he heard?” she repeated; “why she said it to his face, and asked if he was not to be godfather; and would have done so if he had been a thousand baronets in one. It’s no matter where she is, or what she says—she always says just that which seems right and proper—a little too lightly sometimes about religious opinions; but then, you see, she does not think any harm in bantering people about their foolish notions on theology, as she calls them, for I am afraid my brother has taught her many heterodox opinions; oh! Jessie Wilson is quite a match for the Baronet, let me tell you, sir, whenever she has a mind to talk.”

Our guest looked interested in this glowing



account of his niece, and again and again expressed his impatience to see her; but my mother was determined to err on the safe side if she erred at all.

“It is better that her uncle Benjamin should become red-hot with impatience to see her, than that she should be thrown into hysterics or excitement by knowing that he has reached Timberton,” she had said; “When my judgment assures me, I will consent to it, not before. In affliction I never yield to impulsive desires without an assurance that a greater evil lies on the other hand.”

“You are right, Mrs. Neville — you are right. I see you feel that her life is in your hands. This feeling—this judgment has preserved the dear child through a frightful peril.” Such had been the expressed veto of my mother—such the uncle’s approbation.

After breakfast we walked down to Dame Wilson’s and I spent a few minutes with Jessie and quietly told her that Jerome and I were going to dine with her old friend, the Captain,

who loved her much, and longed to see her again at the Angle House. She said, in the faintest whisper—

“Tell him I’ll be maternal sponsor to his Boobyistical Institution.”

When I returned to her uncle and informed him of her remark, he laid his hand on my shoulder, and said—

“This young woman must be an extraordinary being, Mr. Neville; and we may be quite certain that her brain has not suffered in her affliction, for this remark of hers could not have been gathered up, and, as it were, distilled and concentrated, and given out in that fashion without the clearest perception imaginable of the higher reasoning and speculative faculties. It is an undoubted proof to me that she might be informed of my arrival without any danger, but—I will wait your mother’s pleasure; and after all she is right, quite right, to be on the safe side.”

“Quite right, Benjamin,” added his sister Martha. “I never knew Mrs. Neville wrong

at any time, the twenty years I have had the honour of calling her my friend. We owe the dear girl's life to her care beyond doubt; she never could have gone through if it had not been for Mrs. Neville. I can now understand, Harry, the feelings of the late Sir Langton and Lady Elliott, and how they held their lives as due to her care."

When his sister mentioned the name of Elliott, he glanced at me with an expression of so much mystery, blended with satisfaction, that I felt we suspected the existence of a fact which we had reached from different points, and of which Dame Wilson, at that moment, had not the least conception. He said—

"How singularly things sometimes occur; we meet people in far distant lands by the merest chance, and part with them never expecting to see them again; and after twenty or thirty years you find yourself next door neighbours. When I first went to Jamaica I landed at Port-Royal; and before I had been there three weeks, I had the fiercest conten-

tion and combat with a gentlemanly black-guard that I ever had in my life. The rascal and thief would have assassinated me if it had not been for some naval officer, who struck the cocked pistol out of his hand with his cane. That knave I now find in holy orders, and Vicar of this village. The quarrel began about our poor dear sister."

Dame Wilson sprung from her chair almost convulsively, and exclaimed—

"Oh, Benjamin, Benjamin—dearly as I love my child, I would sooner see her die, and die with her this moment than she should be—oh! oh! it shall not be—it will drive me mad."

She wrung her hands in bitterest agony, and walked up and down the house like one more than half bereft of her reason.

"Martha, my dear Martha—what is the matter; what have I said to pain you! This Rushworth surely is not the rascal who helped his father to ruin us!" His eager looks and earnest words showed the depth of his emotions.


"He is—he is, Benjamin; oh, God, have mercy on me."

At this instant my calm and thoughtful mother came into the room, having heard more earnest words than went below, well knowing that the wakeful and watchful ears of affliction caught up stray sounds with preternatural keenness. Seeing Dame Wilson in such a state of excitement, and her brother not much less so, she said, calmly and affectionately—

"My dear friends, whatever the cause of this excitement, it must be instantly checked. Let me beg of you, Mr. Wilson, to take a walk with my son, and leave your sister with me, for she is to me as a sister also."

In saying this she took her by the hand, and kissed her with a tenderness which melted the brother into tears.

"We will go out, my dear Martha; for God's sake, don't trouble, there really is no cause for trouble. Our grief will soon be all turned into joy and gladness, as soon as the



dear child is able to leave her bed. Do, pray be comforted. I have brought home with me ample proofs that Jessie was lawfully married—she came to England an honourable woman—a virtuous wife.”

“For God’s sake let me know then,—who—  
—who did she—she—”

The words died in her throat, she could not utter the syllables, and that instant the thought flashed across his mind which gave her such exquisite agony, and he gently said—

“I see it all, Martha, you have been deceiving yourself. Good God—no--no; her husband was as honourable a man as ever lived.”

“Benjamin—Benjamin—your words are like pardon to one condemned. Come, kiss me—oh, God has mercy!”

They wept in each other’s arms in silence, and my mother and I stood by looking into each other’s face, not without emotion, not without tears.

“It is well—it is well—come now, you un-

derstand the matter. It is time you were at the Mansion ; Sir Leo Elliott is a punctual man, and it wants but seven minutes to eleven," said my Mother.

In as many seconds, we had left the house, and were on our way towards the park front of the Mansion.

## CHAPTER XIV.

BENJAMIN DINGLE—EBNA EBONAL AGAIN.

WHILE crossing the bottom of the lawn, we saw Jerome Givington making toward the same turn in the path, so we met about two hundred yards from the front entrance. "Yonder stands Sir Leo," I said, "on his quarter-deck." Mr. Wilson looked toward a miniature ship-of-war, anchored off an island in the middle of the lake, which lay to the right of the lawn.

"You cannot see him on that quarter-deck," said Jerome; "look over the entrance there; do you see the volumes of



smoke rolling up from the battery? That's the Captain's quarter-deck, and a pleasant place it is, I assure you."

"From whence, I presume, he can view his miniature ship Victor, riding at anchor, and fancy himself at sea. I daresay he uses a pretty heap of weed in a year if he works at his pleasure with so much ability and activity."

"Most men are earnest in their pleasures, especially when they are a little vicious," added Jerome. "I have known men work harder to kill themselves by the agonies of diseased sensations than I ever have to find the means of living."

"The pleasure of intense covetousness for instance is of this quickening and killing character," I observed, "and the acrid moral turpitude seems to intensify the diseased appetite until the whole man is a heap of bitterness beyond redemption."

"Such was the character of your vicar's father," remarked Mr. Wilson, "and the

chances are that his son has walked in his steps."

In a few minutes we were joined by Sir Leo, who came down from his "quarter-deck," and crossed the lawn to meet us. Salutations past, he said—

"Allow me to pilot you round the principal views, Mr. Wilson, though they may not be such as you may be disposed to swear by, but you can find fault with them to your heart's content, if you are content to do so.

"Do you smoke, sir? but I scarcely need ask you; for one, by old experience, gets to know a smoker by instinct—take a cigar—"

"Thank you, sir; I smoke a little now and then," he replied and the Baronet went on—

"These young men never smoke until after dinner—Mr. Givington, I should say, for this last of the Nevilles professes not to be guilty of this virtue, even upon the house top. They say, the folks, I mean not these gentlemen, that the highest virtue in civilised society is to conceal all its vices;

and then cheat themselves into the belief that no such qualities exist. Hence they fester in secret and slough beneath the surface, until disease taints everything and renders cure impossible; but by the whole being thrown out by volcanic eruption, it is as the old distich has it:—

‘If fools have ulcers and their pride conceal ‘em,  
Fools must have ulcers still for none can heal ‘em.’

There is no hope of the Rector living many days I hear; has he signed his will?”

Jerome replied to these inquiries; and added that the doctor and himself were appointed trustees for the only surviving descendant—his daughter’s son. The Baronet expressed a good deal of satisfaction about the point, more than the appearance of things seemed to warrant. “Do you know whether he has left any property to Rushworth.”

“He has not, Sir Leo; but he has left a legacy to Miss Amy Rushworth.”

“I am glad to know it, very glad; for that poor girl has had a sorrowful life, no

doubt, no doubt; well, we shall see, we shall—”

“Some day more clearly than now,” observed Mr. Wilson. “The want of clearness of perception, or the perception of the false, as probably the true, almost drove my sister out of her mind this morning.”

“Indeed, Mr. Wilson, I am pained to hear you say it; what is the matter? but, in truth, I suspect, perhaps I know. I have been waiting for a fit opportunity to make known to her and her dear niece the most important discovery—one, sir, that almost drives me out of my mind with joy; but we shall soon see clearly. At yonder alcove I appointed to meet with one who has mainly brought me into this state of bewildering delight. She will bring, I make no doubt, the proof of one fact which I crave. I was married in Jamaica, Mr. Wilson—ah—”

“If you are the same man as I suspect you are, from a peculiarity at the end of your nose.”

"This grisly projection, I presume?"

"The same, Sir Leo. I owe my life to the prompt use of your cane!"

"The devil you do. How so?" exclaimed the Baronet. "I have no recollection of the fact; when did it occur? you see, I have been in a smart lot of fighting in my day; but with my cane—that must have been a civil broil."

"A most uncivil one, I calculate. It was in front of St. Catherine's Church, Port Royal, and—"

"That man who would have shot you by moon-light was—no matter; I know the circumstance. Well, this is very singular; I saw you, if it really were you—only once after. That man, sir, I have caned more than once. I never learned who you were; but I was off to sea the next day for awhile. It is very strange, Mr. Wilson. I was married at St. Catherine's—"

"For which reason, amongst others, you may perhaps be interested in reading a little

document which I have in my pocket book. Allow me to show it to you." Mr. Benjamin placed it in the Baronet's hand just as we reached the alcove, and with extraordinary emotion he read out as follows :—

"Leo Elliott, of Timberton, England, now midshipman of the ship Victor, in port, married to Jessie Dingle, spinster, at this church of St. Catherine's, May 12th, 1799, Port Royal, Jamaica.

"Signed in my presence at the time of this entry

"Rev. John Deane, D.D.

"Leo Elliott. }

"Jessie Dingle. }

"Witnesses—William Brighton, R.A.

„ Emily Johnson.

"I, James Seldon, officiating curate of St. Catherine's Church, Port Royal, Jamaica, do hereby assert that the above is a *verbatim* copy of the entry of the marriage.

"Register marked D 22., page 54.

“Made by me, James Seldon, for Mr. Benjamin Dingle.”

“Sir Leo Elliott, I am Benjamin Dingle, your humble servant.”

“I give you my hand, Mr. Dingle, as my brother-in-law—as my dear and unfortunate wife’s only brother. I am beyond measure happy to find all this. Light another cigar, Benjamin. Come, Jerome, kindle one for once before dinner ; and Harry may take out his note-book and chronicle our vices, and correct his own. This is passing strange. It seems to add beauty to this view. Come, be seated—we must wait here till the gipsy comes.”

Sir Leo sat down a moment, as if to show us how to follow him ; then he sprung again to his feet, meantime blowing out such volumes of smoke that I was surprised to know where it came from. “The gipsy is behindhand. Upon my word, brother Benjamin, you seem to like the weed. Take another. I have had

a first-rate article for years past from Dame Wilson. Dame Dingle, heigho. God bless the dear lady. Harry, you must—tell—oh, poor, dear soul—sweet—sweet—my sweet child, my charming Jessie. God, have mercy on my child. Why, I can now see that all her ways and manners, and peculiarities, are just for all the world like my own and her dear mother's. My sweet, angel-hearted little methodist. Poor dear angel, how she loved me. Then to be burnt to death, in such circumstances, oh, it's horrible to think about. Perish rather than abandon her helpless infant. Dear Jessie was thrown through the flames and saved—to be unknown to this time, and over yonder she lies as helpless as the day she was saved, and her father so near, and she knows it not. Dear Jessie, my child, my child. How I have loved her ways and manners, and watched the developement of her mind and character. Oh, she has been the greatest joy of my life. Harry, lad, you have educated the dear girl, the sweet lady, fit to appear in



any society in broad England. You shall have your reward. Yonder comes Ebna Ebonal. Her kith and kin shall squat on the estate for ever—for ever."

The Baronet, carried away with his own emotions, spoke louder and louder as he proceeded ; so that by the time he reached the end, he almost shouted. That notable, quick-eyed, swift-witted gipsy, pretty clearly caught up his words, for she sung out in return—

"They squatted there before your honour was born ; and will, with Sir Leo's grace, do so when he is at rest at Edgecombe."

"This gipsy, Mr.—Mr. Dingle—never fails to moralize, tacking a grave truth and a grave consideration to her living utterances," quietly observed Jerome. "She is certainly a most singular personage, a long way beyond my ability to understand."

"All the people whom I have met since I have been in Timberton appear to me of the same class—the extraordinary, the singular. My sister also seems to have become over-

shadowed, and changed into something of a kindred nature. What I shall find my niece, exceeds my humble ability to conceive."

"You will find her all that is good and wise, and beautiful ; as full of love as a seraph ; as knowing as a cherub. She is a beautiful bird of Paradise, who can sing as divinely as the lark and nightingale combined. Oh, sir, she is the apple of my eye. God, have mercy, and restore her. Ask Ebna Ebonal what she thinks of Jessie Wilson, Jessie Dingle, Jessie Dingle."

Again the Baronet gave vent to his feelings, by giving play to his lungs. The gipsy, without changing her regular step, came quietly up to the alcove ; then, standing in front of the Baronet, she said—

"Out upon your honour, to call an honest wife's blessed child by her maidenhood name, as if ye were ashamed of your own family's, and wanted to dignify yourself with the name of my place of tents, the Dark Dingle, where Ebna Ebonal was born ; and yon two

lads, Seth and Samuel, who will be true Dark Dingle men, all their born days, ever ready to fight or shout for the honour of the heiress of Timberton and Edgecombe, Jessie Wilson Elliott, your honour's own flesh and blood." She began again to gyrate her two fore-fingers, moving them upwards, until they were above her head. She then spread out her fingers, and exclaimed, "Their sorrow shall be turned to joy and singing who are true-hearted; their darkness to light, who are faithful; but the hope of the cruel shall perish, the hypocrite's eyes shall be put out speedily, for the old adder shall be anointed with his own grease, and poisoned with his heart's venom."

The gipsy shook her hands violently; and, suddenly becoming motionless, she looked at Mr. Dingle with her unique gaze, and added—

"Ay, man, the Dingle's sheen of light flashes from your eyes at the corners—upwards; be wise, and watchful, and wary."

The great Spirit neither slumbers, nor sleeps, nor is absent from dark dingles, nor the tents of gipsies."

"Ebna Ebonal!" suddenly and sharply spake Sir Leo; "Ebna Ebonal!"

"Leo Elliott!" as quickly rejoined the gipsy.

"Where is Sarah Jarvis?"

"At the Red Lion, at Timberton."

"Good, very good: meet us to-morrow, at twelve o'clock, at noon-day. At the Angle House, to-day—no more—"

"But after to-morrow, I will squeeze mine enemy, and shake the corner-stone of the Vicarage. Amen."

"Do as you wish to be done by, Ebna Ebonal," said Jerome Givington.

"That's what I mean to do, that's what I always do; that's what I will do after to-morrow. When I say foul slanders of others may they choke my mouth with my own venom. When I rob the fatherless and the widow, may my heart be desolate, and my

children want bread; when I crush the poor and curse them in my thought, may they tread me under foot, and have no pity; when I am a liar and malignant to others, may I be punished as I deserve; may my hours be numbered by my thumb-nails. I will, your reverence, do unto others as I wish that others should do unto me. Noon-day at the Angle House!" Again her fore-fingers gyrated as she walked away.

While she was yet in sight, there came a man in haste, to say the Rector of Edgecombe had closed his eyes for ever. There was evidently a cloud of unexpected gloom overshadowing us.

Our thoughts found relief by a long and sharp walk round the pleasure-grounds and park, and talking of the view, the sky, the timber trees, the evergreens, the deer, sheep, cows, horses, game, hedges, gates, gaps, stiles, slugs, and singing birds.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE PARTIES EXAMINED.

THE feuds between Timberton and Edgecombe had often been as severe as they were senseless, as contemptible as they were bitter. To destroy this animus had been one of the great aims of my father and mother, and though but little progress was made for ten or a dozen years, yet, as the population passed away, and was renewed, a better spirit was manifested; absurd conduct met its fair reward; scandal was discountenanced, and friendly intercourse and social sympathies became more general and beneficial to both villages. The last few years had much

changed the disposition and manners of the people. The residence of Captain Leo had contributed to this mainly, for he went here, and there and everywhere, making the influence of his manly and gentlemanly character and spirit felt, so that the inhabitants were disposed to do this and that, and forbear, because they had grown to have a wholesome dread of his displeasure, and appreciation of his approbation:—"What will Captain Leo say?—and the Captain won't like that!—It's flying in the very face of our best friend!" and such like forms of utterance, became a sort of invisible police, which kept many a feud from boiling over, and nipped the scandal of a gossiping busy-body in the bud.

Although no one was surprised that my mother took the charge of Jessie in her illness, yet the coming and going of Sir Leo—here and there, and everywhere—the mysterious dodging about by day and night of the old gipsy at the shop, at the Mansion, at

the Angle House, and the hasty way in which the ill-grained Vicar had been seen running and twisting himself as he ran from the green to the Vicarage—all conspired to quicken the impulse of curiosity, and intensify the interest felt in the welfare of the parties concerned.

Somehow or other a mysterious rumour, which had been whispered about amongst the “topping-folks,” that Sir Leo Elliott had found out his long lost child, and the heir of Timberton and Edgecombe, was spoken out in broad day at the church-yard gate on “the Sunday” and “all the days of the week;” at another centre of news, the old “smithy.”

The meeting which had taken place at the alcove—in the pleasure gardens of the Mansion—had been seen from a distance by some persons; and it was quite probable that the loud voice of the Baronet had made stray words reach the ears of persons sufficiently sharp to shape out a coherent sense and significance. Who the lost child was, no-



body seemed to have any clear idea, for opinions swayed and shifted backward and forward with great rapidity—and grave consideration gave countenance to this state of uncertainty in the public mind of Timberton and Edgecombe. The supposed flirtation between the young Ensign Willifer and Eliza Wimbush was now very clearly seen by very clear-sighted people to have been the beginning of an early suspicion that she was the lost child. The interest which my mother and Jerome Givington took in the welfare of the flirting Eliza, in taking her into the Angle House under their care, it was boldly said was for the express purpose of “cultivating her, and correcting her ways.”

As Eliza Wimbush was placed in a position where she would be sure to hear all the opinions current about the matter, it was deemed prudent by my mother and the Curate of Edgecombe, to take her aside for a few minutes as soon as they knew that Jessie Wilson was the heiress, and guard her from

any false ideas which might be suggested to her by thoughtless rumours. This they did, wisely securing two objects by one act. They showed their confidence in her discretion, and secured her self-respect.

In this condition of things, a meeting was appointed to take place at the Angle House at twelve o'clock, at the desire of Sir Leo Elliott, who had previously given me instructions to engage an eminent barrister to examine the evidence, and persons, and facts, upon the point in which he was so deeply interested, and upon a subject which had produced unexpectedly so much excitement in his spirit. I had instructions from Sir Leo to act as I thought proper in the case—fully given in his own handwriting. No regard was to be had to the expense of the counsellor engaged. To one feature of this I peremptorily objected—I would not have the selecting of the barrister. This he very quickly obviated, for he perceived the reason the moment I objected. He forthwith applied to the Honourable Mr.

G——, a friend and neighbour, who selected a proper person for the purpose.

Before all and everything relating to the Baronet I felt, that I stood in relation to Jessie Wilson in a position which gave me rights and privileges as important and sacred to me, as any to which he now laid claim, could possibly be to him. I had known her as the playmate of my childhood. We had roamed the fields together—together trespassed on the precincts of the Mansion in early spring to help ourselves to the snowdrops, violets, and primroses which showed themselves there before they did in the free fields and common woods. She had become to me a second self. The kindest friendship had from the first existed between her aunt and my mother, and the mature declaration of our loves and affections had been a great solace to them both as it had been a rapture to ourselves. I had gone into the wide world to resolutely face any and every difficulty and privation to win for her the means of com-

fortably living in a frugal way in the position in which we were born, and I had so far succeeded as to induce my very prudent and intelligent mother to counsel me to marry the object of my passionate love. I said to myself a thousand times we shall have sufficient to live ; our happiness springs from our own affections, from our own spirits. The wealth of Timberton and Edgecombe, with the heirship thereof, will not be likely to add to my happiness, it may possibly destroy the happiness of both. I don't want her to be proven the heiress of the house and family of the Elliott's. If I can honestly prevent that proof I will. I will use my knowledge and authority to checkmate Sir Leo in this if possible.

I had taken the determination to engage the ablest barrister I could find in London to come down to Timberton to attend the examination of the evidence, to probe every point, and if possible prove that Jessie Wilson was not the daughter—the lawful

daughter of Sir Leo Elliott. For this gentleman's professional advice, and attendance, I paid a third more than the gentlemen had who was engaged by the Honorable Mr. G——, and this out of my hard earnings.

The object of Sir Leo Elliott was to guard himself from self-delusion, to have the calm and dispassionate judgment of a legal mind of high standing as to the validity of all that had come to light, though, as he said before many times, he had not the slightest doubt of all the facts. I had thought proper not to apprise the barrister whom I had engaged as to my motive, but required him to note every discrepancy, and record every defect in the testimony and evidence put forward to prove Jessie Wilson to be Sir Leo's daughter.


At the time appointed every thing was arranged at the Angle House, and to give form and solemnity to the business the Rev. Jerome Givington was placed at the head of the table to write down every opinion, and, if needs be, to put the parties upon their oath.

At that moment I introduced the second legal gentleman, informing the private self-constituted court that I was acting advisedly, to which there was no kind of objection, but rather a considerable sense of satisfaction was felt by the barrister of Sir Leo's and the Honourable Mr. G—— who was present, that so weighty a matter would have the additional opinion of high legal reputation. A statement of the facts known to the reader as given by Sir Leo himself, written by his hand, was given to the chairman to be read as the basis of the inquiry. .

Mr. Benjamin Dingle was first examined by the legal gentleman for Sir Leo, and cross-examined by the other on my part. He went with a friend to St. Catherine's Church to consult the marriage register, and in turning over the pages his eyes fell by chance on the name of his sister, Jessie Dingle, a *verbatim* copy of which he laid before them. He did not, till then, know that his sister had been lawfully mar-

ried. Supposed she had been led astray by some military or naval officer ; did not know how, or when, or where she died, until after he reached England. Had heard from Messrs. Wells and Trueman that his sister Jessie had left one child, living with his other sister, Martha, at Timberton. Had heard that his sister Jessie had left two children, but did not know that she was married before observing the document in question. Did not then know where his sister was. Had afterwards learned that she was then on her way to England.

The examination of Ebna Ebonal, resulted in the following particulars. She had been insulted, becalled, belied, and malignantly treated from time to time by the Vicar of Timberton. To be able to do to him as she had ever wished to be done by, she had sought to discover the character of his former life, and his father, before him, she had found out that he and his sire ruined Dame Wilson's family. She remembered the



day when the child Jessie was brought to Timberton to Dame Wilson's shop. She knew that Wilson was not the real name; but could not find out what it was. Learned by accident from Harry Neville at Brompton that Captain Leo's wife's maiden name was Jessie Dingle. Suspected from divers minute features and finish of the ear-drops that Captain Leo was Jessie's father, either lawfully or unlawfully. She was strengthened in that idea by the child Jessie being reported and acknowledged to be the chance child of Dame Wilson's sister—name unknown—the age answering to that of the child of the Captain's wife if alive. She knew that his wife died a violent death at Plymouth according to report at the time. She knew Chrysacoma Willifer, of Cheltenham, well—told her fortune, which came true; too true for the poor young lady. She had been twice to Cheltenham to find Sarah Jarvis—learned she was gone to live at Plymouth. She went to Plymouth to save Eliza Wimbush from



ruin at the instigation of Mrs. Neville, and at the expense of Sir Leo Elliott, found the wanderer in bed at a respectable Inn, the Tawny Lion of Timbuctoo, kept by John Jarvis, husband of Sarah Jarvis; found a Bible book there with the following words written on the blank leaf:—"From your affectionate sister —— Timberton." The other words being scratched out. She tried to purchase the Bible book; but could not—was sure it had belonged to Dame Wilson's sister--the book was produced. She had found out in company with Sir Leo himself, that Sarah Jarvis had suckled the child thrown out of the window of the house on fire, the child of the lady whom her mother had nursed, and escaped burning to death by being that night obliged to be at home. Her name was Mrs. Thoms—that the child was given into the nurse's hands by those who caught it, as she had run to the fire at the first alarm, and had told the people that she was nursing the lady. That Mrs. Thoms had

found a great lot of money in a purse in the clothes which wrapped up the child—that Sarah Jarvis did not know how much—that the child had been left at the workhouse door by Mrs. Thoms—that her conscience accused her—that she afterwards, in two or three days, made her daughter Sarah Jarvis, who was over from Cheltenham on a visit, dress herself up shabbily, and go with her child into the workhouse for relief for a few nights to get possession of the child again—that she did so, and brought the infant away; and after keeping the child until it was able to run, about fifteen months old, she, Sarah Jarvis, had taken it to the sister Martha Wilson, at Timberton, according to the wish of her mother, Mrs. Thoms. That Mrs. Elliott had given Mrs. Thoms a letter to post when she left for the night, directed to Miss Martha Wilson, Timberton. That she did not post it that evening, and the next day the possession of the purse of money tempted her to the commission of a crime. She burnt all the letter,

but the directions. That Mrs. Thoms sent several things to Martha Wilson which satisfied her that the child left on the hands of Mrs. Thoms was her sister Jessie's child. The most important that Sarah Jarvis remembered was a Bible book mark, worked by Martha and given to her sister Jessie on her twenty-first birthday. That Miss Martha Wilson wished the child to be brought to her, and she would take the care of it, and that Sarah Jarvis brought it from Anchor Court, Plymouth, to Timberton, and delivered it to the aunt, now called Dame Wilson.

No cross-questioning could detect the slightest equivocation, fault, or contradiction, in what was stated by Ebna Ebonal.

When Sarah Jarvis was brought into the room, the Honourable Mr. G——fixed his eyes upon her in a way which produced a corresponding look from her—a look of surprise—as if they had met before.

Sarah Jarvis had a remarkable face ; neither handsome nor ugly ; but pleasant to look at

because of the unmistakeable traits of character. The face looked loyal and truthful; a compressed mouth, yet open eyes under straight eyebrows, which made an incongruity which was very characteristic; her forehead remarkably white and transparent; and the vena frontalis was very conspicuous. It was very easy to remember her face, for these features were not likely to change much by the wear and tear of life.

The Honourable Gentleman said to me: "Mr. Neville, just allow Mrs. Jarvis to remain in the other room two or three minutes." This was done, when he said—

"Gentlemen: I have seen this woman before and under rather singular circumstances considering this present inquiry, and if I am not mistaken in her identity, and those eyes, eyebrows, and forehead, with those visible veins, make it difficult for one to be deceived, I met her at the door of the Mitre Inn, Oxford. I do not know what gave the occasion, but well remember she informed

me that the little child's mother was burnt to death in Plymouth, and that she was then taking the child to her aunt. I was then at college, you can make some inquiries to learn if I am correct. It is probable that this examination has unconsciously refreshed my memory."

Sarah Jarvis was then brought into the room.

She gave the same particular and substantial information respecting the matter stated by Ebna Ebonal, as learned from her at Plymouth, in the presence of Sir Leo Elliott himself. No discrepancy of fact could be detected. In addition to which it was elicited by the legal gentleman whom I had engaged, that her mother, having taken the precaution of sending her daughter, Sarah Jarvis, immediately home to Cheltenham with the infant, lest any inquiry should be made, and paid her fifty pounds to nurse and keep the child until all danger of inquiry was blown over; a year had passed, and no person had

ever been to her, nor had she ever heard any remark made as to what had become of the infant. That Mrs. Thoms must have had quite two hundred pounds in the purse in gold and Bank of England notes. That she herself had done a good and a mother's part by the child; that the delay in taking the child to the aunt at Timberton, arose from fear of inquiry being made about the money. That she met her mother at Winchester, where she received the money to pay her expenses to Timberton and back, from which place she went to Reading; from thence by coach to Oxford, where she tarried all night.

“Where did you stop at Oxford?”

“I do not remember the name of the place. I never was there before. It was not far from where the coach stopped, for I looked at the front of that inn a good deal. I was on the other side of the street at a respectable place. I think it was a little lower down the street.”

“Why did you go there?”

“Some gentleman directed me there as a comfortable place.”

“Do you know who that gentleman was?”

“I never saw him before; he held the child while I got down from the top of the coach.”

“Do you know any gentleman now in this room?”

“I thought when I first came in, this gentleman here seemed to know me, and that he was Captain Elliott, but I am now sure he is not, for the Captain was not so tall, but wider in the shoulders, and had something curious about the end of his nose.”


She went on to show that she passed through Banbury and reached Timberton about dusk, delivered the child to Miss Martha Wilson, at her shop; that she had tea and supper there, and put the child to bed, the aunt helping; left the child when she was asleep, and slept herself at the Red Lion, the same place where she slept last night; she was not sure

that she could remember the lady to whom she delivered the child ; she could swear that there was a little bit of flesh about the size of a grain of wheat growing at the back of the right ear, almost at the bottom, hanging down like an eardropper, when she was delivered up to Miss Martha Wilson. She was ever so many times tempted to cut it off with the scissors, fearing it should grow and enlarge, but did not like to pain the poor thing. Mrs. Thoms died about five years after. She left a smart lot of money behind her, she was a hoarding sort of a woman ; most of the money fell into her own hands, which enabled her husband to take the Tawny Lion of Timbuctoo where they had lived ever since. It was a respectable house. She hoped she should be allowed to see Captain Elliott once again for Chrysacoma Willifer's sake. The child which the Captain took care of, she had heard the gipsy say, was gone to India with his regiment.

By cross-examination she said—She did



not see the child until she was in the work-house; she knew the child by the mark behind her right ear which her mother had described; did not know whether there were more infants of that age in the house; the matron said it was the one that had been left near the front door three nights before. She took the child with her back to Cheltenham, the next day after she left the house; she had her own child with her about six weeks old, or thereabouts. She had two children before but her third child was her last. She did not know what name her mother gave to Captain Leo Elliott as the name of her married daughter; never called herself by any other name than her own, Sarah Jarvis. The Bible book was to have been given up with the child, but was not put in the bundle by mistake. John Jarvis used to say it might some day be found useful. She did not know how Mrs. Thoms obtained the book. It was not, she thought, in the bundle which made the covering for the child when thrown out of the window; thought Mrs.



Elliott gave it to her. Could not tell why her mother scratched out parts of the writing. Hoped her mother did not take it away from the house without leave. Was quite sure that it was intended to be given up with the child ; did not know that it was not, until she returned home. She thought at first that the young woman who sought lodging for a night or two at her house was the one whom she suckled as a child, when she knew she came from Timberton and saw a mole on her ear, because she thought it likely that the bit of flesh had been pulled or cut off and a mole mark followed. Could not say otherwise whether she should have thought she was the child, grown then to a woman.

The legal gentlemen had not the opportunity to look at the back of the right ear of Jessie Wilson to bear witness as to the existence of such a natural excrescence, but Harry Neville, Mrs. Neville, Mrs. Givington, and Mrs. Martha Wilson could, and did testify to the fact, that the same was still to be seen in

the same place, grown larger as the ear grew, and ceased growing when she did herself; that at that time it was about twice the size of a barleycorn. The identity of Jessie Wilson's existence for twenty years at her aunt's reduced the difficulty of the question at issue—from a loss of her existence for twenty one years and five months to one year and about three or four months. The whole of the examination lasted five hours and a half, and the united opinion of the barristers was that "beyond the possibility of a doubt, Jessie Wilson, niece of Martha Dingle, *alias* Dame Wilson, was the lawful daughter of Leo Elliott and his wife, Jessie Elliott."


It scarcely need be stated that the whole of this transaction was at the time, in the manner it occurred, placed on record by the Rev. Jerome Givington, and the manuscript book signed by every person present. It is now an important document in the family archives.

After the business was settled, the carriage came from the Mansion to fetch the party to

dine with Sir Leo Elliott. For reasons which I did not choose to explain, I declined the honour and pleasure of accompanying them. I had loved and won the heart of Jessie. I had asked to have our loves consummated in matrimony, and had the assurance that there was but one difficulty, which a few months at furthest would remove—the true and lawful name by which she should be married. That name had transpired, had come fully to light, but while I remained the son of a poor, though noble-hearted man, a Dissenting Minister, deceased—I, a struggling adventurer, in the commonwealth of letters, it had transformed my village maiden—my accomplished shopkeeper, into Miss Jessie Elliott, Heiress of Timberton and Edgecombe, whose future dwelling in the country would be the Mansion Baronial, about whose grounds we had together often trespassed to gather early flowers, whose London residence would be one of the oldest and noblest in one of the most aristocratic squares. Who then would

salute those lips which had sent maddening raptures through my spirit when they were full of ruby life, for which I would rather have sacrificed my life than not have kissed when they were brown and parched with typhus fever, and which I had kissed, and the memory of which I felt would sustain me in any future ordeal which I might be called upon to endure, when perhaps they might be kissed again in health, not by Harry Neville, but by some one who was great, by courtesy.

Fortunately my mind suddenly settled down into something like a dead calm, so that I passed the first interview after the meeting without difficulty, and for several days after all things came and went as usual, and my dear Jessie, nursed by my mother, grew daily stronger and stronger, so that she made inquiries about the affairs of her friends, sent half-saucy messages to Captain Leo, accompanied by deeply affectionate ones. She began to talk about her Uncle Benjamin, and to



wonder when they should hear from him. Hoped she should be well by the time of his coming, that she might know "who was her father besides Abraham and the Almighty." She hoped he would "not come to England with one chest stuffed full of gold and another full of jaundice, with the whites of his eyes as yellow as his golden guineas, and his heart as long and puckered as the wrinkled fore-finger of Ebna Ebonal." She said that she had "learned more divinity the four or five days she had been ill than Jerome Givington could have taught her in as many years." She did not know that she had been insensible as many weeks as she thought she had been ill days. Nor must it be supposed that these remarks were made in a breath. She was still only able to speak in a whisper. They were stray remarks made to my mother in her gentle talk to quiet, and amuse her at intervals, when weariness made the monotony of a sick room oppressive.

The three or four next days I successfully

avoided Sir Leo, but my visits to see Jessie Wilson—for so I must call her—at least until she herself is made fully aware that she is somebody, and that Ebna Ebonal is better qualified to lecture at her father's new institution about "who's who, and what's what," than she suspected.

By one kind of manœuvre and another, I managed to keep clear of the Baronet for eight days; on the ninth he caught me in my antique study, busily engaged upon a second work of fiction. He exclaimed—

"Caught at last in the Sanctum Sanctorum of the Taautic Cross! Are you studying 'arts inhibited,' Harry Neville?"

## CHAPTER XVI.

AFFAIRS OF JAMAICA—UNCLE BENJAMIN—HOW  
CAPTAIN LEO FOUND A WORTHY VICAR.


THE old and venerable, because good, Rector of Edgecombe, breathed his last in peace, and one week after he was buried in the church where he had officiated for more than half-a-century. Sir Leo Elliott and most of the “topping folks” of Edgecombe and Timberton attended the funeral. The Vicar of the latter place was invited, but he did not make his appearance.

Sir Leo had himself assured me that his brother’s intentions and unfinished instructions to his attorneys should be respected.



How, when, and in what way he purposed to do so, I had not the remotest idea. It certainly had dawned upon my mind that he intended to endow his new scheme and model village institution, with a respectable income for a master, or professor, or lecturer, and appoint me to the position ; but I found out afterwards that he had not exactly that idea, though he did calculate that I should frequently figure in that prospective establishment. Other things had much occupied his mind which, in some measure, accounted for his not referring to the subject again either to me or to my mother.

My own little slice of good fortune, and the unmistakeable prospect which I had of earning a comfortable living by congenial labour, made me, in a considerable degree, indifferent to the result. I will not say that the coming home of Mr. Benjamin Dingle, with a respectable competency, which he intended to leave to my own dear Jessie, did not assist in strengthening my feelings. Sir Leo gave the




Rectory to Jerome Givington immediately after the funeral, frankly, freely, without solicitation; and as he was convinced, with a view to the very best interests of the people of Edgecombe and neighbourhood, "A more conscientious, upright, high-minded, and devoted clergyman than Jerome Givington did not exist," was the reason assigned by the donor; and a feeling of general satisfaction followed the appointment.

The perverse conduct and acrid behaviour of William Rushworth had revealed a condition of moral nature of the most criminal character—a mind thoroughly vicious—while the lessons of the past in relation to his father, and the experience of life growing out of his position, and the duties of his function and christian profession had no power to quicken his spirit with honesty or wisdom. His nature seemed irredeemably bad. The violence of his temper was at times most criminal in spirit; the dastardly blow which he struck Jerome Givington may be taken as proof. In

many respects his nature was wonderfully like his pet—a bull-terrier, to which he had a passionate attachment—indeed, there seemed to have been a wondrous fellow feeling which made them understand each other kindly and truly, as by instinctive sympathy. The apostolic injunction, “Beware of dogs,” might with great propriety have been worn on his gown, as an appropriate phylactery.

Perhaps no man’s character was ever more clearly understood by another than William Rushworth’s was by Sir Leo Elliott. The lash and the lash only could bring him to the condition in which it was possible for him to understand himself, and on this principle the Captain acted. He had, it seems, more than once before-time, given the cold-blooded, yet irate Vicar, corporal chastisement, and the humiliation of having been so thoroughly whipped or thrashed for his offence sank deeper into his spirit than the smart of the cane-blows did into his body, and that is saying a great deal—but there is no



particular grounds to suppose that the influence was corrective. On the contrary, it seems to have stirred up all the latent bile and bitterness of his nature, on which he fed until the desire of life was poisoned by his own venom. The acid virus clogged the principles of life at the cistern, and extinguished his badly organized and misdeveloped existence. The gift of the Rectory of Edgecombe to Jerome Givington acted upon his spirit like a deadly incubus. He became oppressed with a sense of suffocation, which continued about a week after the burial of the Rector, increasing every day and hour in violence, until he expired from water at the heart, about the time when Sir Leo Elliott found me ill at ease in my study.

It is a saying, that a man dies pretty much in the same way he lives, and for the most part it was so with the Vicar of Timberton. He peremptorily insisted that no tidings of his ailment should be taken to the

Angle House, nor would he consent to have any medical advice, while his reason, what little he had, was coherent. His wife, then, immediately called in the Edgecombe surgeon—but help there was none. His unexpected death made a material change, and truth compels me to say, removed a heavy load of misery from my sister Mary's heart. It had a corresponding influence on all persons connected with the Angle House, nor was there a single expression of regret heard in Timberton, except the howlings of the Vicar's bull-terrier.

The dog was shot, by order, to appease the manes of a kindred spirit. Beyond that "dark curtain" I presume not to speculate.

As the gift of the Vicarage was also in the hands of Sir Leo, he chose to consult Jerome Givington about a fit and proper person to whom the living might be given. Jerome recommended a worthy man of forty, who had been a hard-working curate like

himself in a large town, upon an income which thousands of valets and cooks would have despised as beneath their notice.

His name was Joseph Jepson, an unmarried man. The Baronet having obtained his address, took his own way of being satisfied about his character before he chose to have him as a neighbour in such a position. He accordingly found him out, and for hours was treading on his heels in the back streets, bye-lanes, and courts of filth, poverty, and squalor. Joseph Jepson, at two o'clock, turned into a small, but respectable chop-house, to get some refreshments of the simple character supplied at such places. A minute after a respectable seaman sat in front of him, who was disposed to talk, and make free with his money. His polite and gentlemanly behaviour at once attracted Joseph Jepson's notice, and a conversation of much interest soon followed. The seaman, asked how parsons managed to kill time and get an appetite?

The first remark which J. Jepson made to

this secured him in reality the Vicarage of Timberton, and its income of three hundred pounds per annum.

"If you mean, sir, such men as myself individually, I must tell you we use time diligently, not kill it; and our difficulty is not to get an appetite, but something to satisfy its craving."

"Oh! oh!" said the seaman, "then you are one of those gentlemen who are called 'poor curates,' who are required to appear as gentlemen upon next to nothing a year, and give alms to the poor into the bargain?"

"I am not ashamed to be one of the poor curates, sir; there is a state in which, as the Apostle says,—'Having nothing, yet possessing all things.'"

"That's just the way I understood this question, this church question; whose apostle you quote. You, poor curates, have nothing; and the bishops and magnates possess all things. I wish to God I could turn the tables round for one year; depend upon it, sir, such fellows as I very much question the advocacy of

those men who enrich themselves and their families thereby."

"You now speak earnestly, sir, you see—"

"I do see, sir, that the waiter here knows what you require without asking, so I see you are a constant customer; bring me a luncheon just like this gentleman's. I have found an appetite this morning trying to find a man's body to save, while you have gained the same end I presume by seeking to save a soul—from the error of his ways."

"I have been trying to do my duty, sir; and am now making my dinner, not luncheon. One chop, two potatoes, *one bread*, and a glass of water. As a seaman you understand the nature of duty and—"

"Oh yes, pretty well, sir; and I would sooner command a crew of pirates than a conclave of parsons, barring the poor curate, who seems a better sort of a biped than the oleaginous bishops. By the bye, sir, did you ever chance to meet with — I'll take a little stout, waiter, if you please, thank you; the



chop looks well done,—ever chance to meet with a cross-eyed, one-armed, one legged man, a seaman about my own size, in any of the back places about these parts—called Joe Gunn ?”

“ I am not sure ; there is a one-armed, one-legged seaman living in a court not far from here ; but he is not cross-eyed. I shall be going to the court after I leave here.”

“ I shall very gladly avail myself of your offer, and I think by your aid that I shall find him, as you know the back places in this quarter.”

“ The man I refer to has a pension of tenpence a day, not much for the loss of his two right limbs and minor wounds, and the prime and middle portions of his life behind him.”

When they reached Scraggle’s Court, the Baronet felt a sad sickness of spirit, not unaccompanied by some bitter reflection upon our civilization. The old seaman was not the man in question ; but the Curate himself more strongly resembled the man he was really looking after. The old pensioner’s memory

was better than the gentleman's with the poor Curate, he exclaimed—

“An sure enough I knows your honour—served under your honour in the Mediterranean. I be a poor body now, by the bit of life left in me, your honour, Captain Elliott, of the ship—Victor.”

Sir Leo was not quite prepared to find a man who knew him, while he was making his adventitious visit; but he was not uninterested in the fact; and after talking with the poor sufferer some time about past events, he gave him a substantial proof of his visit, and made his exit.

The poor curate, was of opinion that the man might be found by exploring the courts and allies, but the seaman cut him short by informing him that if he would have the kindness to walk with him to his hotel, he would give him a cheque for a few pounds to disburse amongst the poor objects whose interests and wants he had so much at heart.

Sir Leo begged he would do him the favour of dining with him for the courtesy he had shown. As soon as they were seated at the Hotel, the Captain said—

“I have a liking for your society, sir, and shall be very glad to have you for a neighbour; what say you to a little country air and quiet rest to re-create your physical man? Will you take a glass of sherry, Mr. Jepson? you see, I have the honour of knowing your name!”

“You certainly have the advantage of me in more ways than one, for you have the power as well as the will to do good. I have heard you called Captain Elliott by the old seaman, and the name seems familiar, and yet I cannot recall to memory any fact to—”

“Oh, no, I dare say not; so I will tell you an old friend of yours would like to have you for a neighbour and a coadjutor, in converting souls and comforting bodies; and, according to the old saying,

‘a fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind.’ There is a comfortable Vicarage at your service, if you will allow the widow and small family of the late Incumbent to occupy the Vicarage House until you require it for your own family. You will have Mr. Jerome Givington for a fellow worker in the same district. I beg to press upon you the acceptance of the living of Timberton.”

He said—“I have the honour of seeing Sir Leo Elliott, and—”

“He has the honour, by your favour, of addressing the Vicar of Timberton! I beg you will take this cheque to smoothe your exit from this place, and leave a few of your poor a trifle to help them to bear their condition for a week or two. See, dinner is ready—I beg you will be seated, sir. I leave by the eight o’clock coach. Jerome Givington will communicate with you, and arrange for your speedy advent.”

The following Sunday, Joseph Jepson did duty for the first time in our parish church.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## CONGRATULATIONS—JESSIE'S QUESTION.

"ARE you studying 'arts inhibited,' Harry Neville?" said Sir Leo Elliott, as he broke into my antique study-room, in the centre of the Angle House—the Taautic Cross,—after I had avoided him for nine days.

"If I am, Sir Leo, I am caught in the fact," I said, rising to give him a chair by the fire.

"Are you well to-day, Harry? You look pale and worn; I fear you are working too hard. Under present circumstances you ought not to be engaged in any studies of this nature. You look as if you would be

acting more wisely to be lying on the sofa, or taking a gallop across the park."

"It's pleasanter for me to be alone."

"Alone! why, in that case you may be alone, riding round the park as long as you please; you will only have the beast under you, instead of beside you, for the old cat sits here looking as melancholy as yourself. Let me tell you, Harry Neville, that I mean to use the privilege of a friend, and insist upon your putting away your work for a season, and attend to your health."

"My health is as good as ever it was, Sir Leo. Have you seen Ebna Ebonal of late?"

"No. I think you both have been conspiring to play at hide and seek, and have kept me running here and there, like the wandering Jew. I have not seen her since the examination of the evidence. By the way, Harry, I find that there has been no charge made for Mr. C——. How is it you omitted it from the account?"

"He simply attended as a friend of mine,

consequently I had no claim to make any charge upon you, Sir Leo. My mother thinks that the information of the arrival of Mr. Benj. Dingle may be safely communicated to Jessie Wil——, Jessie Elliott, Miss—— I suppose now, safely communicated, if all's well to-morrow. She asked me this morning if I had seen her 'cigar customer lately.' ”

“God bless the dear child—this suspense is very trying to my spirit; but, it would be madness, in the extreme, to endanger her dear life by doing anything merely to gratify our emotions. Really, Harry Neville, if Mr. C—— came to the Angle House as a friend of yours only, I must send him the same amount by cheque as you paid the other gentleman. Under such circumstances as these, you should not have taxed your legal friends, and if you paid him yourself, under the influence of some impulse, I cannot allow such an irregular procedure.”

“I have only done what I thought proper, and——”

"No doubt about that, whatever ; but I have not yet done what I think proper, but I mean to do so immediately. I will not allow you to endanger your health by following your studies with this unrelaxing perseverance when such vital interests are at stake. It must not be. The fragile life of my dear child depends upon your health. If she found you missed a visit, I am sure she would be in terror lest you were ill ; and, if you should break down, it would be the death of her as sure as we are in the Angle House. Put your pen down, man ; come, we will go for a walk ; it's a fine breezy atmosphere ; leave the study to your tom-cat, and give him an opportunity to record his ideas about the personal and spiritual appearance of the Taaautic-cross Trismegistis. Oh, here comes Mr. Dingle. I am sure he will support my view, and vote for a walk."

"Most certainly, both from interest and principle ; for, in reality, the principal interest



is your health, for that of my niece seems to rest entirely on you and your good and experienced mother."

To appeals and arguments of this nature I could say nothing. The Doctor met us in the hall, for he came daily to report progress. He said—

"Good morning, Sir Leo—and, gentlemen, I am glad to say the young lady is decidedly improving; I have given her a little wine this morning, and the system answers to the stimulant kindly. We shall do now, gentlemen—the danger is passed, depend upon it. All has turned on Mrs. Neville's nursing! intelligent nursing, gentlemen, has saved this case from terminating fatally."

The joy of Mr. Dingle showed itself in kind and affectionate utterances of a touching nature. Sir Leo caught the Doctor by both hands and said—

"Your words are like oil poured upon troubled waters. God bless the dear child, and the nurse also—I hope I can see—"

"Not a moment before Mrs. Neville gives consent. She is still exceedingly weak; but a few days will make a great change for the better; but, young man—you look as if your circulation wanted quickening. You must attend to your own health a little more—a ride ten or twenty miles every day would refresh your spirits, Mr. Neville, and put a little more colour in your face. I beg leave to prescribe for you gratuitously a ten-mile ride on one of the horses of Sir Leo's which require exercise—twice a day."

"Very excellent advice, Doctor—we are just going to have the first dose, and learn what sort of a jockey our Jamaica friend happens to be—by the bye, what sort of wine will be best for your patient?"

"I have ordered some of your best claret for the present—next week, perhaps, we shall tax your old port."


"That's capital—that's capital," cried Sir Leo.

"Which do you mean—eh—my advice, or your port—or your prospects?"

“All, all, all! So I have the sanction of your Æsculapian advice to enforce two doses daily. Well, I shall be as absolute in nursing as other folks.”

For many reasons—from many motives, I allowed myself to be taken from my studies, and in matters touching my health, to be guided by the advice of others. No one knew better than I, that my health of body and mind required invigorating. What my future might be did not particularly trouble me, for I considered my death by no means the most unfortunate thing that could happen. Sometimes I thought that it would be the most desirable consummation, so that the dear object of my love was well in health and happy in spirit.

In this condition of things, three weeks passed away, during which Jessie Wilson still remained Jessie Wilson — daily growing stronger and stronger, and beginning again to sit up; she delighted to lay her head upon my shoulder, and look into my face.



Not unfrequently, the gentle voice—the fit accompaniment of the placid and good face of Jerome Givington, was heard in that peaceful room, reading portions of the Church service, with emotions befitting the occasion, and which those parts of the Common Prayers are so well calculated to inspire and foster in sincere minds.

Rumour spread all these facts far and wide, and weeks before Sir Leo Elliott had seen his daughter, as such; or that Jessie Wilson heard that she was not Jessie Wilson, but Miss Elliott; many carriage people had driven to the Mansion to offer Sir Leo their congratulations, and be introduced to the late discovered heiress, whom report pronounced not only very beautiful, but highly talented and accomplished.

The condition of the Baronet was at times perplexing, for he was obliged, day after day, and week after week, to repeat why he could not then introduce them to his long-lost daughter.

Mrs. Augustus Whitehead several times in a fortnight called with her only son, the honourable Mr. Willowbrain Whitehead, very tenderly impatient to have the honour of being introduced to the dear young lady, and of introducing her only son. It was with some difficulty that Sir Leo Elliott restrained her from driving up to the village to make personal inquiries how the sweet lady was, and the unfortunate lady her aunt. She had been assured by a very dear friend that Mr. Benjamin Dingle was immensely rich. She thought that his long absence from society had a little rusticated him, and that familiar association with Mr. Willowbrain, who was considered the "very gloss of fashion," would be most acceptable, and appreciated by a gentleman of so much good sense.

Amongst many others who called with the most friendly feeling was the family of Colonel the Honourable E. W. and his amiable lady and four daughters. The gallant Colonel had been at school with Captain Leo, and many

a well contested scuffle they had about the environs of Datchet before their fortunes in life made them separate for a quarter of a century. He was a man of broad philanthropy, of enlightened conservative principle, while those of Sir Leo's were enlightened radicalism. They were nevertheless true-hearted men and friends. His lady was unquestionably in her manners most polished. It was a positive rapture to sit by her side and listen to her conversation, so intelligent, so calm, and so self-possessed.

Her daughters were really juvenile reflections of their worthy mother. This friendly visit of the Colonel and his family was most agreeable. On the day after their first call at the Mansion Sir Leo sent them an invitation to dine on the following Saturday.

Joseph Jepson, the new Vicar, had taken up his abode in approved apartments in the Vicarage, and his heart was quickened with the best emotions of our common nature at finding himself so comfortably settled for

life, where he could discharge the duties of a parish priest with self-denying devotion and good-will towards all men, and live in the delightful companionship of esteemed friends. He sincerely studied the welfare of all about him. The co-operation of the two active clergymen rapidly advanced the scheme of Sir Leo Elliott's Institution, so that plans of the building were under consideration as often as circumstances would permit. My sister Mary felt again the joys of "Our Old House at Home."

My mother found that her patient progressed more rapidly than she anticipated, so that a week before she had fixed in her own mind, Jessie was prepared for the full disclosure of all the facts which are known to the reader.

When it had been completely revealed to her that her mother was the lawful wife of Midshipman Leo Elliott, that she had been burnt to death in Plymouth, herself saved from death by being thrown out of the window,

and that she was the only lawful child of Sir Leo Elliott, and Heiress of Timberton and Edgecombe, and not until all this had been slowly day after day communicated, did they allow her father to see her in her easy chair in her chamber. I sat alone at the time beneath the five tall fir trees at the bottom of the garden of the Angle House.

The meeting of father and daughter, the meeting of old friends, was but of short duration, but it was of a more passionate character than either my mother, or her aunt, or uncle dreamed of witnessing, so that, that person who could best judge, gently but firmly insisted upon being left immediately alone with her charge. Sir Leo obeyed the voice of my mother instantly, like one who understood how to obey as well as how to command. The uncle followed his example, and the fond and affectionate aunt paused a moment to wipe her eyes, and then followed her brother. Meanwhile my mother prepared Jessie a comforting negus as she began to relate an



anecdote which occurred when she was nursing her Uncle and Aunt Elliott in Damascus.

"If all this is true, Mrs. Neville, and not a strangely wild, yet coherent sort of a dream, tell me, before I taste this negus, do you think—do you think, Harry—"

"Take a few spoonfuls first, my child; you can tell me what you think afterwards."

"No, no, Mrs. Neville; it's what you think; I must hear what you think about it before I can touch a drop."

"Think about what, my dear child."

"Do you think—Harry Neville will—love me as much—love me—as much now I have a father as he did when I was a poor orphan girl? Do you, Mrs. Neville?"

"You had better ask him to-morrow when you see him yourself."

"To-morrow! what! is he not coming this evening?"

"No, my child, I wished him not, for your sake. You have had already too much excitement. Ask him to-morrow."

"I feel as if I dare not ask him, and yet I want to know; what do you think, Mrs. Neville?"

"I think you have no cause to fear to ask him. I am sure he will not misunderstand your purpose."

"Shall you see him this evening, Mrs. Neville?"

"I hope so, my child."

"Then tell him—"

"Tell him what? What shall I tell him?"


"Tell him—Mrs. Neville—tell him that Jessie, the village shopkeeper's niece, knows now in what name she shall be married."

Jessie Wilson Elliott drank the glass of negus at a draught.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

MY MIND HAS BEEN HAPPIER—I MUST THROW  
MY SMOOTH PEBBLES OUT OF MY OWN  
SLING—HE SHALL KNOW IT FROM MY OWN  
LIPS.

So severe had been the prostration of the sufferer, that the road back to health and strength was lingering and wearisome; yet a calm mind and a high purpose carried my mother through her arduous duty. She had been three months from her own home, and from the time she entered the roof of Dame Wilson until the dear object of her care and solicitude was able to leave it also for exercise, she did not leave the house. My visits continued as usual; those of the Baronet, the



now recognized father of Jessie, also, but I endeavoured as much as possible to avoid meeting with him there. As every day strengthened the convalescent, I was agreeably released from several matters which interfered with my own purposes and studies.

The last week in April was come, bringing with it a pleasant foretaste of the warm sunny days of a genial May, and my mother felt that she might leave the house of her friend and her late charge with perfect safety. From the time she asked my mother the question relating to the future condition of my love, she seemed to have the question uppermost in her mind, and yet not able from some motive, to give it utterance. Many reasons prompted me not to refer to that particular point, so that more than a week passed.

Her anxious father had intreated, day after day, for her to commence taking a carriage drive, morning and evening, without her showing the least inclination to consent.

"Jessie, my dear child," said Sir Leo, one

day with more than usual thoughtfulness and paternal tenderness, "I fear you have something upon your mind, which makes you uneasy—something which you want to reveal, yet do not feel yourself strong enough to grapple it. What is it, my child?"

"No, Sir Leo; I have nothing more than usual to occupy my mind, that I know of, unless it be those matters growing out of my condition."

"That's it, my child, your condition being somewhat changed—"

"I mean my condition of convalescence, Sir Leo."

"Just so—just so; they are such as you never can forget—to the end of your life. I know your mind is occupied with such matters; but is there nothing which immediately presses on your thoughts; hangs, as it were, on your tongue, ready to fall off, and would do, but for the restraint which you put upon yourself. That is what I want to learn."

"The time has been when I was happier than I am now."

"And yet you have as many dear friends as ever, and have a kind and affectionate uncle into the bargain, to say nothing about your having found a father, my dear Jessie. You must tell your father your wants and troubles."

"I have found a father, it seems, but—"

"But what, my child?"

"I have not, nor can I as easily find obedience to him."

"Then my grey hairs will go in sorrow to the grave, for I have been twenty years searching to find my child. Is that easily finding a daughter? Will it take you that time to admit me into your spirit, clothed with the reverence and sense of obedience due to a father?"

"Oh, no, no; I have revered and very highly esteemed you, Sir Leo, from my infancy. I feel that you are a wise and good gentleman, but you see I have followed

the dictates of my aunt and my own heart so long that I shall have hard work to get into any other track. David could not wear the armour provided for him by Saul. I must throw my smooth pebbles out of my own sling, in my own way, until I can learn a better way to fight."

"When my wishes conflict with those of your aunt's, it will most likely be the wisest course to follow those of that best friend you have, in the world! but as to the dictates of your own heart in relation to the future of your life, I may now tell you once and for ever, that as sure as the estates of Timberton and Edgecombe will one day be yours, I shall never consent to your breaking your engagements with Harry Neville."

"Now, Sir Leo Elliott has found a daughter and Jessie Wilson—"

"A father!"

"A father—a dear, kind father in one who has been esteemed as a friend and respected as a gentleman."

"God bless you, my child, my child," sobbed the Baronet, as he clasped his daughter to his bosom the first time in his life, and felt the throbbings of his own child's heart and her soft cheek and warm tears mingling with his own; "God bless you, my Jessie—my dear Jessie's own offspring—my child—my child."

No other human eye looked upon their emotions, and how long they remained weeping in each other's arms is not known. It is known that the Baronet's carriage and pair of grey horses were standing still or gently pacing up and down the street until the footman was sleeping and the coachman dreaming.

"Will you take a ride in the carriage this fine afternoon round the Park, Jessie?" asked Sir Leo, after they had recovered their composure, and her aunt and uncle were again in the front sitting-room which overlooked the street, the room in which the first declaration of love had been made between her and Harry Neville.



"No, not to-day, Sir Leo—my father—what must I say—how must I speak, Captain Leo? How funny it sounds, father—papa. A drive in the carriage round the park with my papa—with my father, Sir Leo Elliott. It is all a dream, is it not, my aunt. You look as if it were all delusion, and Uncle Benjamin looks at me as if I were a *lusus naturæ* brought up with the terrible 'Tawny Lion of Timbuctoo.' How I should like to see—my first keeper, the notable Sarah Jarvis."

"Hey day, my dear child, it rejoices my heart to hear you begin to talk like yourself again."

"'Like myself,' you wanted to say, but let me entreat you, my father, my papa, to send the coachman and his horses and carriage to their dormitory, for they are all sleeping in the sun, tired waiting while—"

"You are deciding about a drive round the park."

"I don't like that way much. I shall be a

long time before I go there; the old shocky-headed keeper used to frighten us—frighten me—away when we—when I went violeting there; no, I had better not ride to-day. I will walk in the garden with Uncle Benjamin and aunt."

"You have already walked until you are tired, my Jessie," said her aunt; "you had better go with Sir Leo, it will do you good.

"Your uncle will ride with us," Jessie, come, put on your bonnet and cloak."

"Indeed, papa—my father, how strange it sounds, I am really not able to go whizzing through the air in a carriage, like a cannon ball from here to the park, in no time. The very idea makes me giddy."

"It will be our sole pleasure to go slow or fast, as you please."

"It's not so much slow or fast that oppresses my brain," said Jessie, as if her thoughts were heavier than she wished them to appear; "it's the idea of the distance. From Timberton shop to Timberton Mal-

sion! why it's ten times as far as I have travelled since last Christmas Eve."

"We will go just as far as you please, and no farther," said Sir Leo, springing from his chair.

"Then my first ride in my father's carriage shall be from Timberton shop to Timberton Angle House, to visit Mrs. Neville and tell Harry my name."

"Your name, my child! he knew it before you did, or your father either, or Ebna Ebonal."

"I don't know that he knows, but I do know that he shall know it from my lips."

My mother had left the shop alone in the same quiet and unobtrusive way that she had gone there three months before, and since then, ten o'clock, no communication had been effected between the two places.

Jerome Givington and Sara after dinner went to Edgecombe to make arrangements for purchasing the greater part of the furniture of the Rectory-house, and our servant

Jane was gone with them to see to the children. Mr. Benjamin Dingle was at his sister's, so that the Angle House was as quiet as death, when I left my mother in the sitting-room. Half-an-hour after, I found my mother leaning back in her easy chair, fast asleep—as peaceful in mind as one of the angels of Paradise. She did not move, so I returned to the house-top. The afternoon was as beautifully fine as the Sunday when Jessie Wilson stood by my side there, and shed tears of strange rapture, and said in the fervour of her pure heart's passionate love—“If yonder Mansion and the estates of the Elliott's were mine, I could not find it in my heart to offer them to purchase your love—but I could lay them at your feet joyously because of that love.” Now, I was standing there with the same depth of devotion—with the same love—the same spirit; but sad beyond measure at the strange ways by which human beings are led into love, and through that noblest principle of our nature into sor-

row and bitterness—sometimes into agony and despair. That hypothetical condition had, in a brief space of time, become a reality, and the dear one who had wept on my bosom in the rapture of maiden love, was now about to step into the elegant carriage, drawn by those splendid grey horses, to the baronial mansion of the Elliotts, her ancestors, herself the heiress of Timberton and Edgecombe; whilst I stood in despondency on the roof of the Angle House, waiting and watching the path of their departure. It was not an easy matter to think soberly of my position. I remembered my dear Jessie then talked about being giddy and throwing herself headlong from the battlements of the Angle House before she had dinner, and though she might have spoken in fun, the thought crossed my mind in earnest as the best way of putting myself to rest and delivering Miss Elliott from obligations contracted, when she thought herself nothing but the village shop-keeper's niece.

The ethical code of my life, mentally constructed, was not based upon a form of words—Thou shalt do this, and thou shalt not do that. It was not built upon the reasoning faculties simply, but upon the higher, more ennobling, more enduring, more divine principles of our nature, the æsthetics of spiritual emotion and life. These are identical with individual existence, and immediately connect man with the infinite Spirit of the universe.

I do not clearly remember at what conclusions I had arrived on the house top, still less what the dreams of my mother were in her arm chair; but I do know that, the carriage with a gentle motion was coming in a direct line to the Angle House. There was no mistake about that fact, nor was there any about the fact that, if I spoke to either of the persons who rode therein, it would be first on the leads where I was standing. The laws of society would say, I was supposed not to know that they

were knocking at the door, and that if no answer was given that nobody was at home. I did not care whether they knew or not, for the code Harry Nevellian, which I had constructed, said :

“If they want me let them come to me ; it is as wicked for the little to lay their necks on the earth to be trampled upon, as it is for the great to set the foot of power and pride on those prostrate necks.”

“The man of virtuous mind commands not nor obeys.”

## CHAPTER XIX.

JESSIE WILSON ELLIOTT—AGREEMENT ON THE  
LEADS OF THE ANGLE HOUSE—AND SETTLE-  
MENT OF DIVERS AFFAIRS.

THE ambling pair of greys came gently to the gate of the Angle House and paused. The well-trained footman in the twinkling of an eye opened the carriage door, and the joyous Baronet, who so lately found his long lost child in the beautiful and accomplished and talented Jessie Wilson, stepped out. Mr. Dingle quickly followed, and both assisted the still shop-keeping feminine humanities, Dame Wilson and Jessie, her niece, to alight. They entered the Angle House without the




ceremony of ringing the bell and knocking—but there was no knocker on that door, mark that my reader—and after the fashion of true-hearted familiarity Sir Leo Elliott, or Jessie, his daughter, for it is a disputed point, opened the hall door, and helped themselves to walk in, there being none there “to command or obey.”

Jessie made her way to the sitting-room, followed by the Baronet and Dame Wilson Dingle and her brother, and fairly caught her watchful nurse fast asleep, whose eyes she had never seen closed in her sick chamber. My mother awoke at the sound of their voices and footsteps, and having received a few words from Jessie and a salutation, repaid by the receiver, she turned aside for the others to present themselves, and before they had accomplished the ceremony the well-known footstep of one, whose every movement was like the life blood of my heart, ascended the stairs to my study. I heard a pause, then the door swayed a little on its hinges, then a

gentle voice said—"Harry,"—then a deep respiration, then a little louder, not much though—"Harry Neville,"—another pause and another respiration which had more of suspiration in its cadence.

Again the footsteps began to ascend the stairs which reached the leads, and the battlement of the Taaotic Cross, the Sacred Symbol of Trismagistus, the thrice Great. I was lounging on a seat with one arm resting on the battlement, supporting my head. The telescope was pointed towards the spot where Captain Leo stood on the Sunday morning when Jessie Wilson looked at the old sailor, as he smoked his pipe on the lawn. As she ascended the stairs, the rustling of her dress sent indescribable sensations through my heart. She stood beside me a moment—she thought and felt as I felt, and that her life, was, under the Almighty, due to my mother, and that my life depended on the loyalty of her love; that our mutual happiness, if not both our lives, rested upon the fidelity of our

conduct towards each other. She knew the opinion of her father, Sir Leo, respecting the matter most deeply absorbing to both—I did not. She had been placed without her knowledge or privity, by facts and circumstances of which she had no kind of control, and at a time when she was insensible to all the affairs of life, placed in a position which made me feel and determine that every future step in the path of our lives, should be initiated by her who had become Miss Elliott. I could not love Jessie Wilson more because she was an Heiress, the fact itself made the manifestation of my love much more difficult; I could not love—who can?—but upon equal terms! I felt constrained, from the very nature of my spirit to exact—from her greater devotion, more obedience to my wishes, more abnegation of herself as a woman, because of her social elevation, than I could have tolerated for a moment under the kind of condition in which our loves had grown up and had been reciprocated. Everything re-



lating to our happiness now depended upon this very kind of conduct of the fair woman who stood beside me, the hem of whose garments touched my feet, bringing an odour "sweeter than the smell of Lebanon." She had drunk deeply of my views of life in days gone bye; my heart's sincerest emotions were known to her, the sacrifices which I had made for the sake of a good conscience were present to her thoughts, the struggles which I had braved, and the difficulties which I had surmounted for her future felicity in life, were amongst her latest remembrances.

After a pause of two or three seconds, while she looked at me with unutterable emotions, she threw her beautiful form on the seat by my side, and half buried my face with her glossy ringlets. Our feelings were of a nature not to be described, a tumult of emotion and love unutterable.

The sound of voices and footsteps below, coming towards the antique study-room, warned us on the house-top to remember.

One small sentence falling from the impassioned lips of Jessie comprehended, as it were, all I could ask—all she could say. It meant all that she had before-time spoken on the same spot—beneath the same sky, with the same glorious sun looking down in divine splendour upon the same Taautic Cross—the symbol of its infinite effulgence—That small sentence said all this, and more—

“Harry Neville, my name is Jessie Wilson Elliott.”

I could have leaped from the battlements that moment, to have saved her from evil, though my death had been an adjunct to the act which delivered her from peril.

“Fie, fie, on you, you mad-cap runaway,” cried the Baronet from below. “You ought to be ashamed of yourself to run up to the house-top to proclaim your good deed to all Timberton. It is not maidenly—not Christian-like, as originally constituted. It’s contrary to the practice of the Nevilles, let me tell you, Jessie Elliott—fie, fie on your

aunt to teach you such conduct; why, upon my soul, Mrs. Neville, your son is actually at the top of the house with my daughter. We must put a stop to this flirtation. It's a very high misdemeanour, Mr. Dingle, in your niece."

"If a misdemeanour, it is certainly a high one," he replied, "as high as the Angle House."

"It's a natural one," observed my mother, "if not an exalted misdemeanour and common to people in high places, Sir Leo. Have you ever been on the leads?"

"Not since I was a thoughtless lad of twelve or fourteen summers. I'll look at the lurking place of these over-lookers of their neighbours. Oh! oh! Mr. Neville, this, then, is the place of your elevated studies, with a star-gazing apparatus *in situ*, to show your lady friends the pathway to a plurality of worlds. It's a pleasant prospect, verily, for a walk by moonlight amongst the stars. The constellation *Leo*, I suppose, is passing to his

heliacal setting and now *Virgo*—ah, aha—is in the ascendancy.”

“The altitude of this place and conversation,” said Jessie, “are too great for my powers ; I must descend, or I shall fly off at a tangent like a comet, without leave to search for an orbit in infinitum. Like Milton’s ‘Fallen Angels,’

‘To find no end in wandering mazes lost.’”

“For heaven’s sake go down, my child, go down to the study to Mrs. Neville ; you have been lost long enough in all conscience, my Jessie. Go with your uncle and me to yonder house in the valley, and dine with us, and let us make arrangements for a May-day holiday on Monday ; and you shall be Queen of the May, my child, and Timberton shall rejoice, and Edgecombe shall be merry, and—”

“No more, no more, Sir Leo ; no more, my papa. I am overpowered by the very sight of the Mansion at this distance. It’s become

a frightful place, I have been lately informed. Ebna Ebonal says it is haunted, and she always speaks the truth. She says that the troubled spirits of the old Baronets have left the antique summer-house and made dreadful work in the Mansion every night. I would not sleep in any of the rooms there alone for all Timberton and Edgecombe combined—no, not for all the world.”

“I’ll have that gipsy ‘tossed up in a blanket ninety-nine times as high as the moon,’ if she attempts to prejudice your mind against the house of your forefathers. You need not sleep there alone.”

“I do not mean it, Sir Leo Elliott, until I have become better acquainted with ghosts, and stouter-hearted.

“Mrs. Neville,” cried out Sir Leo, with startling abruptness, “there is more significance in these dial plates and symbol tables of stone than the uninitiated suspect.”

“Perhaps they symbolize the virtues of the



Nevilles," said Uncle Benjamin, "and record their past good actions; and Mrs. Neville does not mean to proclaim them on the house-top if certain juvenile members of the Elliotts are inclined that way. It is certainly a pleasant, a noble view of the country from this place. That piece of broken ground yonder to the west, by that cluster of brambles, I presume is a portion of the waste, and belongs, of course, to the Lord of the Manor."

"It is waste enough, Mr. Dingle, but it forms no part of the waste, properly speaking. It's the site of a large farm house which once stood there, called the Grange. It was destroyed in the days of Cromwell, and never touched afterwards only by the people of Timberton, who wanted stones to build pigsties, and who would not dig and delve for shapeless ones when they could find them ready hewn above ground, and use them without let or hindrance. Will you purchase

that site and the bit of enclosure beyond? It is a pleasant spot for a house, as you have a mind to build."

"I have a mind, Sir Leo, and I have fixed my mind on that site also; and I am willing to purchase. So if you will name the price for that portion so well defined, I will decide upon the question of business in the presence of these ladies, by their courtesy."

"In matters of business, Mr. Dingle, I am a man of few words. I fix my price, and bate not a jot. You will have to conform to my terms, or you will never build on that place while I am this side *non est*."

"You measure the calibre of your customer's purse, I presume, before you give out your ultimatum?"

"Certainly, to the best of my ability, which is not saying over much," added the Baronet.

Mr. Dingle took out his cigar case, and lighted one of his largest cigars; without speaking, giving five or six tremendous sucks and sending out volumes of smoke, which

half concealed his person, he said, "Your ultimatum, Sir Leo Elliott?"

The Baronet, taking the proffered cigar of Uncle Benjamin, lighted it; and, as if in earnest rivalry, pulled and puffed, and hid himself in smoke as speedily as his customer, and said—

"Your ebony, ivory-headed, walking stick, Mr. Benjamin Dingle."

The customer pulls at his cigar, and sent forth corresponding volumes of fume, from the midst of which he said, "On one condition agreed, agreed."

A double bit of business was evidently about being settled, signs of which had several times shown themselves, for each considered himself unapproachable. The rest of us moved to the windward side of the Angle House housetop, and left the contention to the combatants. The seller pulled and puffed and was up with the customer, who was lighting again, and he heaved through all his frame three or four more respirations, which

sent the fume from his mouth in volumes like smoke from a discharged mortar-piece, and then said, deeply—

“Name it, name it.”

Again Uncle Benjamin did likewise, with like results, and spake—

“That the aforesaid ebony, ivory-headed, walking stick shall be entailed on the heirs male of the Elliotts, of Timberton and Edgecombe, for ever.”

Another cigar was required by Sir Leo and he pulled and pulled and puffed away as if fighting for his country's honour and interest, and with as much resolute purpose. He enveloped himself in smoke, out of which he cried—

“Agreed, agreed. It shall be done. It shall be done.”

Mr. Dingle blew out volume after volume, crying, “A bargain! a bargain!”

A stray voice of a well-known personage was unexpectedly heard behind us, who had, unbidden, come up stairs to the leads of the

Angle House, crying, "A truce! a truce! a truce! The parchment deed shall be signed by the wrinkled fingered gipsy, Ebna Ebonal."

From the density of the fume, the smokers each cried out, "A truce! A truce! who cried a truce?"

"The smoke which your Honours have made on the top of the Angle House has alarmed all Timberton, and that is more than your wisdom could accomplish anyhow, I'm after thinking. If ye have not had enough of smoke and fire in this here waste howling wilderness have a truce a bit, your Honours, and ye will, may-hap, have enough of both in t'other place without a truce. I'm unco glad your Honours ha' greed about the dust and ashes of the old Grange place, an main to ha' the yule-log blazin on the Ingle place afore anither new year, anyhow; a good luck to the name o' Dingle, for it's a bonnie name in the land—"

"And the Dark Dingle, ah, you gipsy;

what? you on the housetop? you sign the agreement? why posterity will wonder—”

“How one of my tribe should condescend to put her ancient name, descended in a line direct from Ebonal Endor, of the Chushites, to Ebna Ebonal, of the Dark Dingle, to a paper-right of inheritance of one who cannot sleep on the bosom of his mother earth without being ‘hipped’ will be a far greater wonder to the grandchildren of Seth and Samuel, anyhow.”

There was a wildness in her look and manner, which was calculated to surprise any person not well acquainted with her character, and Uncle Benjamin gazed at her as he came clear of the cigar smoke, as at one conjured up there during the process of their late exalted pleasure of smoking.

“Good luck to you, mother, for your good opinion of the name of Dingle,” said the Uncle. “I suppose my sister and niece are friends of yours, I hope to have the same privilege.”

“And if your honour is worthy your honour will, if not—not— Did not your honour’s ebony ivory-headed walking stick first touch your honour’s palm when desperation had maddened your mind, and made the line of destiny turn from sorrow and poverty to riches and honour, and left—”

Ebna Ebonal suddenly paused, and gyrated her wrinkled finger before her face, rising it higher and higher, until her arm was at full stretch above her head; meanwhile, Sir Leo Elliott came eagerly forward, his hand visibly shaking, though his eyes were as bright, fixed, and calm as those of a gladiator’s, bent on a formidable antagonist. The eyes of Jessie were feminine duplicates of her father’s; but they moved from his to her uncle’s ebony ivory-headed walking stick, hanging by its cord and tassel to the left hand buttons of his coat, like a sword; then at the wrinkled finger of the gipsy, still gently spinning round in the air; then at her own red-freckled ring-finger; then at me; while my

mother and Dame Dingle, almost like twin-sisters, stood calmly and stately, waiting the issue.

“And left the last male Elliott, like his divine master, ‘a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief?’” tremulously added Sir Leo, when the gipsy continued—

“Until the lost treasure-staff of the Elliott’s shall be restored by the Dingles—the Dingles rebuild the foundations of the Grange—and the last born of the Elliott’s shall make perfect the Angle House of the Nevilles—and the lord of the manor of Timberton and Edgecombe shall secure Seth and Samuel the right to squat.”

As she ceased speaking, an unexpected flash of lightning followed; instantly a terribly loud burst of thunder broke from a cloud above head, in the momentary surprise of which, with a quickness almost magical, Ebna Ebonal made her exit.

We all, as by one common instinct, turned to the stairs, and quietly and silently retraced



our steps to the Hall. Jessie persisted in remaining to take tea with my mother, while Mr. Dingle went with the Baronet in the carriage to dine at the Mansion, while Dame Dingle and I walked back to the village-shop, to arrange some matters of importance to Eliza Wimbush and the village tailor.

Where Ebna Ebonal came from, or where she went when she made her exit, I knew not. The singularity of the matter is that the voice of the clouds, and the lightning of the thunder, should have coincided with the somewhat strange events and facts recorded. I do not pretend to explain the mysterious and spiritual powers of existence, underlying human organization and the organic structure of the great world and the infinite universe. That the actions of human beings in the minutest and most mighty particulars, are the legitimate and necessary consequence of adequate causes, I do not doubt for a moment ; nor will it do for self-satisfied devotees, of our vulgar system of moral mental, and physical

philosophies, to aver that there was no connection between the individuals on the top of the Angle House, and their particular thoughts, feeling and movements of hands, feet and heads, and that flash of lightning and peal of thunder; while the appearance of an extra spot on the sun's disc, ninety-five millions of miles from this earth, creates a corresponding fluctuation in the magnetic needle!


The next day final arrangements were made for a short tour to the south and west coast of England, to recruit more effectually the increasing health and strength of Jessie.

My mother had no desire to travel from place to place sightseeing for amusement, for she had been a great traveller in early life, but Jessie made it a *sine qua non* that she should be of the party. Sir Leo Elliott stood stoutly to his determination that I should be one of the party, but I peremptorily declined—more than declined—positively refused. I was sure Jessie

Wilson Elliott knew why, if her noble-hearted father did not.

Everything was settled, and the travelling carriage, with the usual attendants, left the Angle House with the father and daughter, the brother and sister, and my mother—for Cheltenham.

Jerome and I forthwith set about carrying into effect the plans for the future. They were as follows:—The Givingtons were installed in the Rectory House of Edgecombe, assisted by Joseph Jepson, who had been comfortably settled as Vicar of Timberton. The plans and specifications of a new Grange House had been submitted to a builder and agreed upon, and the foundation lines digged out and the walls commenced, and the grounds full of busy labourers. From divers considerations, personal and relative, the business of the village shop was made over to Eliza Wim-bush, upon certain conditions which secured a continuance of her propriety of conduct. Jonathan Dutch, the tailor, who had loved



the flirting Eliza, had sorrowed over her folly, had forgiven her ingratitude and opened his arms and heart to receive her again.


A fortnight after my friends had left Timberton the bells of the parish church merrily rang, and the whole village was put into a little flutter on suddenly finding that Eliza Wimbush, by the aid of a license and the new vicar, had become the bride of Jonathan Dutch—tailor, and henceforth successor to Mrs. Martha Wilson Dingle retired. The festival was spent pleasantly; they—nay—nay—we—were merry, and, on the whole, wise. Such a wedding party had not been seen in Timberton for many a year. We danced and sung to music and made mirth. I must not forget to add that three old and valuable friends of the bride were there, Seth and Samuel and Ebna Ebonal, and Major White; but she did not know it; of whom the gipsy told strangely queer tales to amuse the bride and the marriage guests.

## CHAPTER XX.

THE LEGAL DEED EXECUTED BY CAPTAIN LEO  
—THE EBONY IVORY-HEADED WALKING  
STICK—TWO WHITEHEADS.


JEROME GIVINGTON, Joseph Jepson, and I, had devoted an entire fortnight to settle the business matters of the present moment, and put them in a fair way of progress for the future, and were now a little at leisure to take a general review of our personal affairs. A simple deed of sale was prepared by Sir Leo's local attorney, according to instructions, and waited only the signatures of the high contracting parties to become absolute, on the

good faith of which Mr. Dingle had ordered his Grange House to be pushed along as fast as the stability of the work would allow. The gardens and little pleasure grounds were also rapidly developing themselves under the immediate direction of the new Vicar, who was a man of fine taste in gardening. Jerome Givington paid that kind of gentlemanly and brotherly attention to my sister Mary which she so much deserved, and which she never could have received if her perverse and acrid husband had lived. The once poor and broken-spirited Amy Rushworth began visibly to rally under the care and personal attentions of the new Vicar. Her health and spirits reviving, her personal appearance seemed to improve in a corresponding degree. She had been shut out from almost all personal intercourse with young people of both sexes, so that the freely going here and there with my sisters to the Angle House, the Rectory of Edgecombe, the Doctor's, and to other of the "topping folks" was a sort



of delightful whirl of pleasure which poured into her heart and soul the sunlight of new life.

A considerable number of papers and documents were left under my care in the Antique Summer House, to which place I resorted whenever I had an hour to spare. One day, while engaged with some of them, my hands unwrapped a document which I proceeded to read, according to instructions, for a special purpose. This paper modified my opinion of the future purposes of Sir Leo Elliott considerably, more especially in relation to the course he would take for the future of his daughter. I was nevertheless far from being at ease in my own mind, for it must be remembered that at this time I had not been made acquainted with what had passed between Jessie Wilson and Sir Leo—touching myself. It was quite likely, in the nature of things, respecting conventional society, that he might choose to unite his daughter to a person of title and position



in society, or at last endeavour to accomplish such a purpose.

The document was drawn up by the hand of Sir Leo Elliott himself, the particular aim of which related to me. It set forth that it had been the intention of his brother Sir Langton to give me the principal sum of five thousand pounds, and that he, Sir Leo, thought proper to add to that sum, from regard to me and Mrs. Neville, the deep respect and attachment he had for Jessie Wilson, niece of Martha Wilson, otherwise called Dame Wilson, shopkeeper, of Timber-ton, the further sum of five thousand pounds, making the sum of ten thousand as a marriage portion.

This document was properly signed, attested, and sealed—blank spaces being left only at the dates, which were to have been put in on the morning of the prospective marriage. This was a most convincing proof that Sir Leo was not only a man of benevolence ; but a man of justice. Benevolence may spring



from impulse, from emotion, it often does; and, however highly it may be esteemed, it is certainly of less value in the general affairs of life than the principle of justice. The intentions of Sir Langton, founded upon substantial reasons and services received, and as he thought not fully requited, were as a matter of course morally entailed upon Sir Leo as any other responsibility, and strict justice required of him their liquidation. On such high principles Sir Leo evidently acted. The document in question was executed when the donor, with princely munificence, sought to be morally just and generous, when he had not the remotest idea that Jessie Wilson was his own child. That did not necessarily secure his approbation of a step immeasurably more important to me. I had taken my cue, and with it determined to play my own game in my own way. I placed the document in its proper place and proceeded with my labours.

The party in pursuit of health and the

picturesque, were duly informed of all that transpired at Timberton. They removed from Cheltenham to Bath; where they unexpectedly met with Mrs. Augustus Whitehead and the honourable Mr. Willowbrain Whitehead, that "gloss of fashion," whose benevolent condescension was sufficient to induce them to patronise the Baronet's newly found daughter, her unfortunate aunt a little, and rub off the rusticity of the very rich Mr. Benjamin Dingle. Friendly visits were exchanged, Mrs. Augustus was particularly gracious to Sir Leo, and Mr. Willowbrain Whitehead was particularly attentive, and elegantly foolish towards the beautiful heiress. Jessie Wilson Elliott informed me how very much she was amused by his transcendant self-appreciation, and the profound estimation he had of his own golden whiskers and his mamma's marmalade, 'made from the recipe scientifically invented and discovered by himself.'

From Jessie I learned that uncle Benjamin

had written to my sister Mary from Bath, and had sent her children very handsome presents. In a postscript to the same letter she said—

“The ebony ivory-headed walking stick, ceded by my uncle at the top of the Angle House, for the site of the Old Grange, is scarcely ever out of my good papa’s hand, never out of his sight by day ; but whether he puts it under his pillow, sets it beside his bed, or has it between the sheets, I am not able to testify.”

From Bath they proceeded to Clifton, from thence to Chepstow, and took a ramble up the Wye, and across to Aberystwith, where they spent three days, returning by some other road to Chepstow, and crossing to Weston-super-Mare. From thence to Salisbury, to Weymouth, to the Isle of Wight, where they tarried for a week. From Cowes they made a little voyage to Plymouth, to look at the site of the frightful calamity which made the Captain a widower and a sorrowful man, and Jessie twenty-one years an orphan. They

visited Sarah Jarvis at the "Tawny Lion of Timbuctoo," where Jessie made the acquaintance of her fostermother who had tenderly cared for her infancy, and safely delivered her charge to Miss Martha Wilson, of Timberton. In that Inn, where Eliza Wimbush took shelter in sorrow of heart, when finding the young Captain Willifer Elliott had set sail—where Ebna Ebonal had found her, by the aid of Seth and Samuel, and where, also, the long sought Sarah Jarvis was discovered, whose husband had a distinct promise from Sir Leo Elliott and Miss Jessie, his daughter and heiress, that their future state should be better than their present or past. Returning to Cowes, they sailed to Dover the following day. From thence they travelled by short stages to London, a place never before seen by my charming Jessie. Up to this time I had kept possession of my apartment in Brompton, and many of my books and papers were still there. Five days passed without receiving any communication, but I was agreeably sur-

prised to receive the following letter on the sixth morning. The date startled me. It was the 21st of June, the anniversary of that day when I went in sorrow and despondency to Richmond Hill, where I met with Ebna Ebonal. The letter ran thus—


“ Harry Neville’s Apartments,

“ The Grove, Brompton, June 21st.

“ MY DEAR HARRY,—

“ Since I left Timberton Angle House, I have seen much that has given me great pleasure, but the whole sinks into a trifle compared with what I now feel, sitting in your chair, writing on your desk with your pen, on your paper, in your sitting-room, in Brompton; your dear mother—God bless her kind heart—talking with Mrs. Whitehead and the dark-eyed Nora below stairs. Your mother, I doubt not, will learn all about your doings in London in the space of half-an-hour, as far as the two daughters of Eve can impart them. Somehow or other I feel a

strange sort of influence as I sit here writing to you at Timberton, from the identical spot where you have sat to write to me when your heart must have been heavy, though your letters were kind—the spot where you have toiled and struggled, day after day, and many of the long watches of the night also, to mature your knowledge, enlarge your wisdom, and enable you to live by the labour of your hand and brain; and all this that you might lay the fruits thereof before me as a pledge of your affection. The remembrance of what you have performed, and the extreme difficulties under which you laboured, fill me with a degree of pride such as I do not know how to explain, unless it springs from a consciousness that it has all been achieved to please your humble servant, which makes me feel that I am something—which is really more flattering to a true mind than the discovery that one is somebody. When it was first revealed to me that I was somebody, I felt for some hours



vexed because I found not that you were somebody also, for I never remember when I did not look up to you in everything as greater and better, and wiser than myself, so that not to find that you were somebody at the same time that my somebody-hood was revealed to me, made me feel vexed. After a while I saw clearly enough that you were something in life—in and of yourself—and that I was nothing—that I was not something, though I might be somebody. This distinction I feel now very clearly, and perhaps you never were so unmistakably something as when you were sitting in this self-same chair, working and struggling, midst your fear and despondency, hoping against hope, until the light of hope and life were well nigh extinguished in despair and darkness.

“I have been into your little sleeping-room, and, woman-like, looked into every unlocked drawer I could find. There is no other person's in the wide world that I would give a button farthing to open. I thought,

perhaps, I might drop upon a stray love-letter or two, or some *billet-doux* from some dark or light-eyed Nora, or other which would have been as interesting a curiosity as if I had received one from some gallant high-minded nonentity of an officer, like that notorious Major White, who played such midnight tricks about Edgecombe Common and Timberton Green, about last 'Yule Eve,' as our old friend, Ebna Ebonal, calls that time of christian life. I have accomplished one two-fold purpose in your dimity dormitory; I found a sharp razor in your dressing-table drawer, so I took the hint, sat down on your bed, took off my shoe and stocking; oh, shocking to talk about a lady's stocking to a young gentleman, and, in one minute, cut a large piece off the peg of my 'little-pick-adarling-toe's' corn, and spoiled your shaving blade at the same time. As I put it safely and slowly, not sharply, back in its place, when you come up here again you will not know who spoiled it, if you forget this information. I give it you *sub rosa*.



"How funny that you should have a flirtation with one Whitehead and I with another. Your mother and I met that Willowbrain! as we came across the Park here; and if she had not been with me, I do not know what might have happened at the head of the Serpentine. I do not wonder at your sticking so closely to this sitting room, as you had such a very pretty little warbling blackbird so nigh at hand. I like the tone of her voice, for it's a she bird I'm speaking about, and I mean to have her into the country in a little time, that her songs may soothe your ear as heretofore. I shall leave to your mother to tell you when we return to Timberton.

"Your JESSIE.

"To Harry Neville, of the Angle House, Timberton."

The sentiment which prompted Jessie to pay a visit to my apartments, and write a letter to me from the self-same spot from which I had so often written to her, was one which I

fully appreciated. My mother's motive, I know, must have been mainly to guard and conduct the person whose welfare was so dear to her, and it was not unlikely she was desirous to hear something respecting myself. If Jessie had been alone, the Baronet would have gone beside himself; but she was in the company of a great traveller, a wise, self-possessed woman, who knew life as well as most people.

When they did return, they were a good deal questioned by Sir Leo where they had been. Jessie said, "Oh, papa, we have only been paying a visit to the Whiteheads."

"To the 'Whiteheads'," exclaimed he, "I did not know they were in town, still less that you knew their House. What on earth induced you to go to see the Whiteheads, Mrs. Neville?"

My mother replied in the vein of Jessie, growing out of the name, which altogether misled the Baronet.

"Oh, nothing remarkable; Jessie wished

to see them, and I thought it better to take a walk to show her the way."

"A pretty start, indeed; visit the Whiteheads in a hackney-coach. Why, you will hear of it as long as you live," said the Baronet.

"I hope we shall. I have enjoyed it amazingly, and I feel sure Mrs. Neville has heard much to please her. But we did not ride; we walked all the way."

"The devil you did. Was your visit to the elder or younger Whitehead, ay?"

"In truth, papa, it was to both."

"I thought so, I thought so; that's good, now: Mrs. Neville to see the elder, and Jessie Elliott to see the younger; that's it, that's it. And pray did you see that 'Gloss of fashion?'"

"We met that golden whiskered Willow-brain as we crossed the Park," said Jessie.

"And what did he say to edify you—ay?"

"He said—'Good morning, ladies, how are you this morning. It's horrid bright, to be sure—the sun is a great bore when it blazes

so unearthly hot just when the Parks are interesting. Where is your carriage waiting? Was it not interesting as well as characteristic. We bowed and parted when I had informed him we were out for a walk."

Mrs. Neville laughed at what Jessie said, or the way she imitated the golden-haired youth—or at the comical looks of Sir Leo—and Mr. Dingle's; but her father still kept in the same course, and asked—

"And what did Mrs. Augustus Whitehead say to you?"

"Nothing, papa—I went upstairs to a sitting room to write a letter to Timberton, and left Mrs. Neville below, talking to both the Whiteheads."

"Why, you said you met Mr. Willowbrain in the 'Park.' What's this merriment, Mrs. Neville; I begin to think I am bewitched?"

"So we did, papa—and when we reached the house, we found Mrs. Whitehead and her daughter, Nora, quite in a flurry to see us come so unexpectedly to visit them."

“Nora—Nora Whitehead! I never heard of her before. She has no daughter, Nora—no daughter whatever—only her ‘gloss of fashion.’ You have been deceived, my dear Jessie, or you are deceiving me.”

“Not a bit of it,” said my mother. “You have been deceiving yourself, Sir Leo. We have been visiting the good people with whom Harry lived in Brompton, whose names happen to be Whitehead; and, as we chanced to meet Mr. Willowbrain Whitehead as we crossed the park, it suggested this foolish conversation.”

There was a general and hearty laugh, by which they prepared themselves for dinner. That night, for the first time, Jessie was taken to the opera—her aunt had not been for twenty-three years, nor her uncle either. The next morning preparations were made to return to Timberton. They had been six weeks from home.

My mother said in her last letter from London—“Dame Wilson Dingle and Mrs.

Neville have become a little gay and talkative according to the opinion of Sir Leo." Jessie assured me that her papa's joyousness was quite exhilarating; and her uncle Benjamin's liver more active, and the yellow of his eyes whiter—whilst the wealthy bachelor averred that he was being led in the way of temptation.

As the opera had so charmed the musical Jessie, they resolved to remain in town a few days longer that her desire might be gratified; so that altogether they were in London nearly three weeks, and the whole time was a continual fascination without fatigue—a sort of delightful dream or reverie, which left charming ideas behind like mythical remembrances. Much gay company had from time to time assembled at Sir Leo's house, and some of the first scientific, literary, and artistic men in the nation—so that Jessie Elliott, her uncle, aunt, and my mother, had been measuring lances with "masters of fence."

## CHAPTER XXI.

GRACE BEFORE MEAT—HOW JESSIE READ  
BOOKS.

MY mother's return was an event which claimed our watchful attention, to meet and bless her as dutiful and affectionate children, even on the threshold of the house where her maternal care and anxiety had been for so many years encircling us. Not many minutes after the time fixed for their arrival in Timberton the great travelling carriage of the Baronet came rolling across the green towards the Angle House, and before we could well reach the garden gate the horses came to a puffing stand still, showing us that the

whole party who had left the Angle House two months before had returned.

"Your dear Jessie has determined to return to her own room at the shop for a while, Harry," said my mother as I conducted her into the house.

"I am glad of it, mother."

"I know you are, so am I, Harry, for your sake."

Her last words made my swollen heart overflow, and as my mother turned into her room I was about to go into my study for the door was close by, just to use my handkerchief unobserved when unexpectedly a sharp push on my shoulders hastened my steps, the door was closed behind me before I could speak, my own dear Jessie was in my arms, and passionate kisses sending maddening raptures through my spirit. It was the impulse of divine passion which continued but a moment. Before I found utterance, or the beautiful Jessie respired, she was in my mother's room, and I alone in my study.



How I walked down stairs to the hall I know not, but I saw Sir Leo Elliott and Dame Wilson Dingle entering the hall in a style worthy of a state occasion. The Baronet's greeting was as usual frank, hearty, and gentlemanly, the Dame's much as usual, though a little more light and joyous.

Mr. Dingle was taken up in conversation with my sisters, and did not seem in any haste to leave the flower garden and their prattle to enter the house. The carriage returned to the Mansion amidst the ringing and clanging sounds of the bells which filled the air.

When dinner was on the table the party was scattered from various causes and motives, so that a general collecting together took place in the garden beneath the five tall fir-trees. From this spot we proceeded in a marshalled order to the dining-room; moved by an instinctive impulse, Sir Leo Elliott gave his arm to my mother, and led the way; Jerome Givington gave his to Dame

Wilson Dingle and followed; Mr. Benjamin Dingle offered his arm to my sister Mary, accepted—Joseph Jepson conducted Mrs. Givington—while the roseate and sparkling Jessie took the initiative, and with *elegantly grotesque* movements, which nobody saw but myself, offered me her beautiful arm, adorned with rich bracelets the gift of her father. I placed my arm lightly on hers, and she instantly clasped it firmly as I often had hers in earlier days, then gently laid her little soft hand on mine. It was ungloved, and slightly elevated before my eyes I saw tremulously, quivering that small digit about which hung so much mystery—The red-freckled ring-finger.

As we gently followed, Jessie seemed to have a distinct consciousness of my thoughts and remembrances, for she said, tenderly looking into my face, “I will, Harry, I will as I said before! I will stake my life to the sweetbread of a butterfly that you misunderstand the tradition, and Captain Leo Elliott shall be judge.”

"He has unexpectedly become an interested party, and would make an unfit judge: I should like very much—"

"Well, I never! so should I some of the roast lamb, green peas and mint sauce which I can smell delightfully. It's just as if a cycle of years had passed since I first smelt this kind of delicious odour as we came from the house-top, and, upon my soul, I would sooner have some of it than the cedars of Lebanon."

"Which—the lamb or the odour?" I asked, when she said—

"Either; the corpuscular effluvia which assail me, are more precious just now than the solid cedar trees of Lebanon, with all their traditional glory into the bargain. How is your friend Eliza—Mrs. Jonathan Dutch I should say? Do you think I can sleep next door to my dormice for a season? Have you starved my birds to death? Is my myrtle in blossom? and my oleanders, are they alive? How good the roast lamb smells

—Is it a shoulder or a loin? I know it's a shoulder, the scent is more ethereal than that of a leg or loin. You must remember I shall want answers to all these, and twenty hundred other questions, so don't forget. I see, you have been painting and decorating and beautifying, as if the Queen of Sheba were coming to visit Harry Neville, instead of Jessie Wilson, niece of Martha Wilson, licensed to deal in tea, coffee, tobacco, and snuff. When did you see the gipsy last, and her twin sons, Seth and Samuel, each one so like both, you can't tell t'other from which?"

We were entering the room, as she made the closing remark, when my mother said—

"Come, my dear, we are waiting for you to say grace."

Without a moment's reflection it seemed, her eyes flashed round the table, when she began to sing a grace from Shakespeare, or rather chant, most melodiously and solemnly.

"May good digestion wait on appetite, and

health on both. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, &c."

The doxology quickened our impulses, so we, in a grand style, poured out a deep flood of melody, all the more exciting, because unexpected.

"Encore!" instinctively cried Sir Leo, Dingle, Jepson, and Givington, so Jessie again led off with "May good digestion, &c." and the holy refrain was chanted with judgment, spirit, and piety.

I am not exactly in a position to affirm that the general digestion was good, but I could, without fear of perjury, swear that the appetites of the party were in first-rate condition, and no one did more ample justice to the roast shoulder of lamb, and green peas and mint sauce, than my bonnie Jessie.

The placid benignity of my mother, blended with most maternal love, was like a serene sky overhead, ever clear, ever pure, ever holy. She looked gently round the

table, until her eyes rested upon Mary, in whose face she saw, with the keen intelligence which springs from knowledge, experience, that there was the light of new hope beaming from her countenance, that a new relation loomed pleasantly ahead, that the cup with which Cupid was about to divine another divination, would be found in the sack of Benjamin, and her heart swelled with joy, for Mary's married life had been like her name, "bitterness," and she felt that with a Dingle it would be far otherwise. She sighed and spoke not, but I saw that it was not a sigh of sorrow.

Sir Leo Elliott seemed to take especial pleasure all the time in talking to me about Ebna Ebonal, and the traditions of the Angle House, and the wonderful virtues and hidden properties of his ebony ivory-headed walking stick; while Jessie, as if to rival her father in his own vein, descanted to Joseph Jepson and Benjamin Dingle on the wonderful powers and occult mysteries connected with

her most curious and precious piece of antique art, which would one day make the Angle House perfect. Sir Leo was at one end of the table, and Jessie at the other near my mother, so that when they assaulted each other, respecting the relative value of their respective treasures, their erudite sallies lighted up our countenances. The serene face and eyes of Joseph Jepson looked brim-full of ineffable joy. Their language spoke to Dame Wilson Dingle a gospel which she knew how to understand and appreciate. She had not met him before, but his looks and manners, and open manliness of voice, made her say across the table to my mother—

“I shall go to Timberton church on Sunday, Mrs. Neville.”

“Do, and I will go with you,” added my mother.

“I shan’t go to Church at all, next Sunday,” said Jessie, catching the words; “but shall spend most of the day studying my theologi-

cal, symbolical, mythological, solaristical, metallurgical, scientific, artistical work of sabeanitical genius."

"The devil you will, Jessie! By my body and breeches I shall not be able to rest until I have seen a curiosity which has such a legion of 'icals' belonging to it; depend upon it, my child, it's no use your attempting to understand it unless I hold my ebony ivory-headed walking stick perpendicularly before your eyes at the same time; I'll worship by your side on Sunday, Jessie, my dear! I will flourish—"

"I beg your pardon, papa, but my devotion will be in my bedroom closet. I shall worship in secret; but if you please you can lend me your bone-handled black crabstick to flourish about a bit if you think there is any virtue in it. I won't scratch off the polish to find the principle of its virtue, lest I should stumble upon a lot of its vices. I should not be at all surprised to find that the stick was the self same divining rod which belonged to



Joseph, for according to Herodotus and Estheneopuos of Joppa, the crab tree bush, from which such are cut, was indigenous in Mesopotamia, the country where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were born, from whom through the bar sinister Ishmaelite, our worthy friend Ebna Ebonal descended, and it is not unlikely in that case that this identical stick of yours has as many 'icals' belonging to it as my work of antique art, only you have not yet discovered them. I should not be surprised if I found out that it was once the greatest treasure which Jethro had in the world, the walkingstick brought by Adam from Paradise; and you, gentlemen, very well know that the same had the Tetragrammaton written on the pith. A small piece more, if you please; a bit of the knuckle, thank you. Just a little more mint sauce; that will do, thanks—ay—can't tell, because you cannot see the pith; it's all moonshine, gentlemen; cannot you tell whether a man has brains without splitting his cranium. If you will let

me have the ebony ivory-headed Joseph-Jethro's divining rod, I'll engage to decide whether the Tetragrammaton is written on its pith; or chop it up and honour it by giving it a spiritual existence by fire, and an everlasting apotheosis."

All this was said with such spirit and joyousness of voice, and so smoothly that the two clergymen and Mr. Dingle looked perfectly astonished. The Vicar could hardly keep his seat, while Sir Leo himself seemed half bewildered with his emotions; first looking at Jessie, then at the stick by his side, then at Jessie again, then at the writer of this work, himself, not clearly knowing what to say or think. My sisters both looked simply profound. Her aunt said "I am afraid, my dear, that you are eating too much mint sauce, not thinking what you are doing while you are talking so learnedly at random."

"I think so, too," added my mother.

"Then I will leave off, half satisfied, for conscience sake," replied Jessie, "when I

have had one more choice morsel of this gelatine knuckle."

"Pray, Miss Elliott," began the new Vicar, "have you ever written any thing upon the subject about which you talk so well and fluently?"

"I write about the subject! What subject, Mr. Jepson? The apotheosis of a walking stick? Or my antique work of art? Or the Flora of Mesopotamia?"

"Either of them, or the nature of the ancient divining rod," replied Joseph Jepson.

"Most certainly not, sir; I have had enough to do to read about them, and would not have done that for any other bipeds in creation beside the one at the top of the table, and the other at the bottom. You see I had a sort of instinctive obedience to one, and a natural desire to obey the other, so I read with both eyes, and turned over the leaves with both hands, reading their very learned and abstruse dry-as-dust-works, two volumes at once. In this way I went through Herodo-

tus and Pansanius both at once, a page at a time. Let me tell you, it is a capital plan; did you ever try it at college? Sometimes I have tried three volumes at once, but I could not get along very well, unless they were all poetry, for then it will not much matter how many you have if you read with your understanding as well as your eyes."

"You surprise me, Miss Elliott; I should think it would be all sheer nonsense!"

"No such thing, my dear sir," replied Jessie, "for instance, take three poets, which you all know, I presume, nearly all by heart—Milton, Cowper, and Tasso. Three lines of each will be as good as thirty. Thus—"

I punctuate them as she emphasised them.

"'Of man's first disobedience and the fruit—"

You told me I remember. Glory built  
Arms. And the chief I sing whose righteous hands  
(Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste  
On selfish principles is shame and guilt),  
Redeemed the tomb of Christ from impious hands.  
Brought death into the world and all our woe?  
The deeds which men admire as half divine!  
Who much in council—much in field sustain'd—"

Now I think those nine lines as good

sense and as good poetry as any nine consecutive lines of either of the three poems. They were the first three that came into my memory. Try it, gentlemen; it's a capital plan to get over the ground."

The Baronet leaned back in his chair, clapped his hands, and laughed outright, and the contagion spread all round the table. Jessie and I had more than once amused ourselves in that fashion, she reading one line aloud, and I another.

"Did you ever write on any subject, Miss Elliott?" again asked Joseph Jepson.

"Oh, yes; once," said Jessie.

"Is it fair to ask on what subject?"

She replied—

"Your question, Mr. Jepson, is not half so brassy as my subject; for I have written a short essay about the origin, metallic quality, and commercial value of Corinthian Brass."

The questioner was fairly confounded, and his looks added to the general mirth which nobody enjoyed more than himself. In this

way the dinner passed by and the afternoon ; and although it was the original intention of Sir Leo to dine at the Mansion, and Mr. Dingle with him, he made such a hearty meal, and was so charmed with his daughter at the Angle House, that he sent word to his valet that he should not return till the evening. When that time came—as the end of time itself will come—the company separated ; Uncle Benjamin guarded my sister Mary to the Vicarage.

I lingered about the place with Jessie, which was endeared to us by so many delightful associations.

## CHAPTER XXII.

THE MAGICAL WALKING-STICK—THE WORK OF  
ANTIQUE ART — JESSIE'S DIRECTIONS—THE  
DISCOVERY OF NEW QUALITIES IN THE STICK  
—THE ANGLE HOUSE MADE PERFECT—THE  
WEDDINGS — SOLAR-SYMBOLS OF TIMBERTON.

THE great, great, great grandfather of Sir Leo Elliott, who lived to be very old, spent twenty-five years in the West Indies, and at that period every man who left England with the intention of saving a fortune was sure to succeed. That man did save a huge heap of gold ; that man purchased the estates of Edgecombe, and added them to the family possession of Timberton. That man planned and built the

Angle House, and the antique summer-house in the pleasure grounds of the Mansion. It is also certain that he brought to England with him when he came with his gold, the walking-stick, called the "Ebony Ivory-Headed." How he came into the possession thereof is as yet a mystery in the family, but many particulars of a remarkable nature and character reflecting these things are preserved in the archives of the Elliotts, and may, possibly, some day, be given to the world. The Stick in question had been for many years kept in a glass-case in the room especially called the study in the Mansion; but in the exercise of youthful impulses, perfectly regardless of consequences, the young midshipman, Leo Elliott, when about to join his ship, took a fancy to show off, at the expense of his family's great treasure. "The ebony ivory-headed walking-stick" had not been walked about for two generations, only looked at and never used; but the young sailor determined to make it his *vade mecum*, and so slyly



walked off with it, surreptitiously, and took it a sea voyage, as he afterward sent his father word, "that it might inhale the sweets of its native West Indies atmosphere;" faithfully promising his sire that if he died of yellow fever the stick should be buried with him, that his remains and "the old crab stick might be found together at the resurrection."

The old Baronet was very much irritated, nay, wrathful with his son; and rumours at the time said that the state of passion into which his otherwise calm nature was thrown, brought on a fit of the gout, of which he died. He died before the news reached him that the midshipman had lost the ebony ivory-headed walking-stick. To the loss of the treasure Sir Langton attributed the failure of heirs, male and female of the Elliotts. By the same kind of induction, which was one of feeling, of sentiment, of faith, of moral consciousness of esthetical perception—an idea not to be laughed at—Captain Leo had attributed the disastrous consequences of the terrible cala-

mity which befel his wife and twins. How Mr. Benjamin Dingle came into possession of the stick has yet to be told ; but it will be in connection with the subject of the history of the Elliotts ; it is sufficient here to know that the first time for a quarter of a century after the loss of that stick, Sir Leo saw it in the hand of Jessie's uncle on the top of the Angle House, when he re-possessed himself of the magical staff by purchase ; the parchments on which the particulars are written are now in my possession. It is a singular fact that Mr. Dingle should have been impressed with a conviction that his personal success in life began from the time of his possession of that Stick.

That was an influence which tradition had always ascribed to it. He had the most perfect conviction that some occult power hung about it ; so he made the condition that it should be made secure by a deed of entail, as he thereby would keep it in his own family through his niece. Some indications of Sir

Leo's appreciation of his long lost treasure have been given; but if the owner of the Stick on the Angle House house-top had fixed the estates of Edgecombe as a fair equivalent, Sir Leo would have signed the deed then and there, and have considered the family treasure cheaply redeemed. Such is the difference of perception of human beings of the same thing under different conditions.

It will be remembered that reference has several times been made to a curious piece of antique art in the possession of Jessie Wilson. Of this a few words must be here written. How this came into the keeping of one who was brought an infant to the shop of Timberton, and scarcely went more than nine miles from that spot in her whole life, until she started on the tour referred to in the last chapter is a matter which I am not yet able to say, for it is still a secret known only to two women, Jessie and her aunt.

The time was come when it was necessary for my loyal Jessie to make me acquainted

with the nature of the commodity which was to make the Angle House perfect. Many facts tended to one point in the construction of the house, for it was built as before stated with a symbolical design. My careful study of every point, corner, projection and emblem of the place satisfied me that nothing was lost, though much was worn away by time, except something from the front door. What that was I did not know. Sir Leo's attention was fixed upon this spot, it will be remembered, and a vague idea had dawned upon his mind, as well as on mine, that Jessie's curious piece of antique art, must have originally belonged to this door.

The day after their return home, I happened to be standing at the front door, minutely examining the space in question feeling sure there was some symbolical significance in addition to its use as a knocker. While thus musing in the glorious warmth of the meridian sun, the sun too at its solstice—Jessie—the centre object of my thoughts—

laid her hand on my shoulder before I saw her or knew that she was near me. It startled me more than usual so that I involuntary cried—"Oh!"

"What hurts you, Harry, this morning? Have you found that your Angle House is *minus* a knocker, a symbolical appendage? What will you give for the original symbols which once filled this space here in the centre of this doo?"

"I would give her the right and privilege to enter the Angle House as the bride of somebody," I replied, as I took her hand from my shoulder.

"I am glad to find you so liberal this morning, Harry Neville, for I find the place swept and garnished, and I should not much mind to leave such a spot the bride of somebody—and—"

"And what, Miss Jessie Elliott?" I asked.

"Jessie Wilson Elliott, if you please, Harry Neville—and—recross the sacred threshold of

Angle House a wife whenever you will have the condescension to do three things for Jessie Wilson, niece of Martha Wilson, shop-keeper, licensed to sell tea, coffee, tobacco, and snuff."

"Name them, Jessie!"

"First. Buy me a plain—what do you call it?"

"A wedding ring! do you mean?"

"Just so, Harry Neville, to fit my red freckled—Angle House traditional—blood-spotted ring-finger."

"Jessie—"

"Harry—"

"What next, Jessie?"

"I will tell you, Harry. Secondly, engage Ebna Ebonal, and Seth, and Samuel to guard you to B——— and back again, and purchase a—what do you call that?"

"A licence to get married, do you—"

"Mean—exactly that and nothing more, not a jot less."

"Jessie Wilson—"

"Jessie Wilson Elliott, spinster, of Timber-ton, in the county of N———. That is my name, my quality, my whereabouts. I presume you know your own?"

"Perfectly. Harry Neville, bachelor!"

"Be it so. Thirdly, bore a hole one inch in diameter exactly in the centre of this front door, make that the centre of an equilateral triangle, at the angles of which bore three holes the same size as the centre one, in all of which points there were once holes of the same character; and the morning in which you accomplish this last request my most curious work of antique art shall again be united to this door and the Angle House be made perfect."

"On which day shall that day's work be performed?"

"On the fifth day from this day," she said, with more than usual excitement, as she turned as if going into the hall, but paused and added—

"Ebna Ebonal, and Seth, and Samuel, not a jot less."

"It shall be, my Jessie, without fail on the fifth day from this day."

"You know where they bide?"

"I do."

"By my body and breeches—it shall be! By my body and breeches—it shall be. It shall be, by my body and breeches."

Sir Leo Elliott and Mr. Dingle had joined us from the front garden gate, and though we knew of their approach, we continued to arrange without restraint, yet not a little surprised to hear the Baronet in a loud and solemnly deep voice swear his singular, ludicrous, but great oath, than to break which, he would sooner have been blown from the mouth of a mortar piece. He added—

"And the bride shall be given away by her father!"

As the Baronet swore he held in his hand above his head the mysterious "ebony, ivory-headed walking stick," which seemed to give more emphatic character to his words. During their tour Jessie had frequently ob-



served closely the minutest scratches and markings about the stick. Though her father had observed this keen scrutiny of his daughter, he did not offer to place it into her hand until the afternoon after they reached home, when she had made her remarks about the staff, still in the world somewhere with the Tetragrammaton, and then she refused to take it from his hands; but now she took hold of her father's wrist to turn the stick about for a more careful examination, and discovered on it several small points which first appeared in a strong sunlight shining like gold, and gold they were and are. It was known by a moment's glance that the ferule at the bottom, of the width of three barley corns, and the one at the top under the ivory head, were of gold. A new thought seemed to cross the mind of Jessie—nay, seemed to take possession of her soul—for her deep blue eyes flashed from beneath their long dark lashes, while her ruby lips quivered as under strong emotion. She held out her little dimpled, red-freckled finger

hand to take the Stick, and her father gave it to her, when by a mere accidental pressure of both their hands the ivory head came off with a spring and remained in the hand of Sir Leo, while the Stick was in that of his daughter's. My two sisters were with my mother in the hall, and Jerome Givington and Joseph Jepson also. There was a great surprise and silence, and look of amazement—quite as much in Jessie as the rest of us, but she did not speak nor did either of us for a few seconds, being intent upon the movements of the person who held the mystical stick, staff measure, or divining rod, or whatever else it may be more properly called, when a voice cried out at the garden gate—

“The measure of the Angle House is the measure of the Angle Oaks, the faith of the planter, and the faith of the builder, and the faith of the speaker, Ebna Ebonal, are identical, as the Teraphino-Dragaphino Stick of the Elliotts will show.”

Our surprise was now increased to astonish-

ment, for Jessie placed the Teraphino-Dragaphino Stick across the door sill, and its width was exactly two sticks, and the height of the door measured three. That day, we measured the Angle House inside and out, all the walls and rooms thereof, and they were all built to the measure of that mystical Stick, and the decades marked thereon by pins of gold.

Sir Leo Elliott beckoned the gipsy with his hand, who came down the path gyrating her wrinkled fore-finger in the air before her, and just as she reached the threshold, side by side, leaning on the gate-posts, stood Seth and Samuel, as motionless, as mysterious, as like as twin sphinxes.

To say who amongst us felt the most astonishment would be difficult; but the sayings and doings during that afternoon at the Angle House strictly relate to the family of the Elliotts and the future heirs of the estates of Timberton and Edgecombe, and will be found recorded in the Archives of the Mansion.

The building of the Grange House made rapid progress ; and by the frequent consultations which took place between my sister Mary and Jessie's Uncle Benjamin, it became evident to the whole family that her tastes were consulted with some prospective intentions. As if inspired by our common feeling, the Vicarage authority began moving this and that, and changing the other, and, in all his movements here and there, he drew after him by her hand, or the hem of her garments, the gentle and long suffering Amy Rushworth. Nor did matters rest there, for the whole village seemed bent upon brightening itself up in all parts as if a spirit of rivalry of the best and highest kind had seized upon all the "topping folks," as well as the common people, the influence of which flew down to Edgecombe like the win. Rumour said, in her clearest most distinct, and emphatic utterance, "Harry Neville, of the Angle House, will marry Jessie Wilson Elliott, the heiress of Timber-

ton and Edgecombe, next Saturday morning. It was all foretold by Ebna Ebonal, and found out by Seth and Samuel, who are gone this morning to B——, to buy the ring and licence to get married; and Sir Leo will be father, and nobody knows who will be bridesmaid; and there will be open house-keeping at the Mansion for all the people of Timberton and Edgecombe, and everybody who comes; and the foundation-stone of the New Timbertonian and Edgecombite's Literary, Scientific, Philosophical, Antiquarian, and Boobyistical Institution will be laid on her bridal day, as an everlasting memorial."

Rather contrary to the usual custom of rumour, all the above was fulfilled to the very word, barring "Boobyistical," which was deemed apocryphal. Without my knowledge, all the necessary preparations for the wedding had been made in London, and on a scale regulated by the opinion of Sir Leo Elliott and what rumour could not find out, nor hit upon in the latitude and longi-

tude of her guesses, were made known to everybody when, the morning previously, the carriage of Colonel the Honourable E. W. drove to the Mansion, with his four beautiful and accomplished daughters.

Perhaps, it may be safely affirmed that of all the persons present that eventful and exceedingly beautiful morning, at the Mansion, the Angle House, and the village shop of Dame Wilson, no one was so ill-qualified to say what was said and acted that day as myself. I have, however, a very distinct knowledge of calling my lovely Jessie up before the sun rose, and walking from the shop by her side, carrying in my arms the curious work of antique art, to the front door of the Angle House; and, just as the sun cast his everliving beams and life-giving light on the earth, fixing the same symbolic treasure on that door from which it had been absent one hundred and fifty-seven years. While we were thus engaged, Ebna Ebonal, and Seth and Samuel stood each in front of one of

the three oaks of the Magi, holding up and spreading out their palms in devout adoration of the Eternal Father, whose most glorious and perfect symbol was rising in divine majesty from the chamber of the East.

In that neat and elegant bed-chamber at the village shop, Jessie Wilson resolved to clothe herself in her bridal garments. The bridal carriage purchased for the occasion, drawn by white horses, left the mansion in state, and from that *sanctum sanctorum* of maiden purity, her sleeping chamber, she issued in bridal robes, and her maids also ; and—went unto the Angle House to meet her bridegroom. He met her on its hallowed threshold and saluted her as his bride. From that hall the whole party walked to the church altar over a path strewn with flowers scattered by the people. The rear of the procession was made by Seth and Samuel, clothed in new garments entirely of Lincoln green, bearing the flowing train of white muslin in which Ebna Ebonal was

enveloped, no part of her person being visible, except the wrinkled finger and thumb of her right hand carrying before her a red and white rose, with three red buds and two white ones hanging beside them. The three gipsies paused at the threshold of the church door, and, while the ceremony was performed, stood perfectly motionless, in a position so as to make an equilateral triangle.

When we came from the altar and reached the door Ebna Ebonal presented us her symbolical bouquet of roses and buds, which we took with our linked fingers and together carried until my bride entered the Angle House the wife of Harry Neville. Those roses and buds, and the white silken silver cord which unites them by a true lover's knot are now hermetically inlaid in glass, and repose beside the Wesleyan hymn book so treasured by Captain Leo, and the Bible Book preserved by Sarah Jarvis.

The carriages conveyed us all to the Mansion, where an entertainment suited to the



occasion and the large means of the Elliott's had been prepared. The company was large and brilliant. My bonnie Bride was determined to spend a few days at the mansion and wander about the dear and delightful walks so familiar to our childhood and youth, where hour after hour we had roamed about hunting for early violets, as happy as we were unconscious then of things by which we were surrounded.

The site of the new institution was at the extreme southern side of the green nearest to Edgcombe, making also a perfect equilateral triangle with the new Grange and the Angle House, of which the three oaks of the Magi were the centre. For reasons of my own I decided upon these points, growing out of the facts recorded in the manuscript volume of traditions collected and written by my father. At three o'clock that day the whole of the company from the Mansion, and every person able to walk in Timberton and Edgcombe, were assembled to see Jessie, the bonnie

bride of Harry Neville, assisted by her father, Sir Leo Elliott, *a master mason*, lay the foundation stone of the Agricultural, &c., Institution. The ceremony was a very imposing one; as pleasing as imposing, and a most significant suggestion to the high-minded and noble-hearted aristocracy and landed proprietors of England, which they will do well to follow *con amore* for the safety and conservation of their order; and the good of the commonwealth.

The closing act of the ceremony, which was performed by the bride in her bridal habiliments, surrounded by her beautiful maids of honour, was to announce that the institution would be for the mutual benefit and use of both the women and the men of Timberton and Edgecombe, and she added—

“I have the authority and honour to announce also that my highly esteemed friend, that profoundly experienced woman, and deservedly revered mother—Ebna Ebonal—whom you all now see present, supported by

her devoted sons, Seth and Samuel, will deliver the opening lecture when this institution, of which I have had the honour and pleasure of laying the foundation stone is finished, the subject of which lecture will be the very comprehensive one in this age, of Who's Who, and What's What."

A burst of universal joy and a shout of glad-some acclamation rose from all Timberton and Edgecombe, startling all the denizens of the rookery from their afternoon dose, sending them by thousands into the air—whirling and cawing over our heads—while the *élite* citizens of the Mansion dovecote on a swifter wing in a compact phalanx, sweeping the sky at a higher altitude, encircled Edgecombe and Timberton in their sublime orbit, while Ebna Ebonal again gyrated her fingers, and exclaimed in a voice, so clear, distinct, and loud, that it was heard by every person present—

"By the Angle House and Angle Oaks of the Magi it shall be. It shall be."

With three cheers for the bride—three for the bridegroom and three for the Baronet—and one for themselves. the ceremony was ended.

After a week of unexampled revelry, in which the true medium of being merry and wise was happily secured, the bride and bridegroom went a gentle tour through Derbyshire, North Wales, the lake country and Scotland, returning home after an absence of a month.

Twenty-five years have passed away since that period, and the memory has nothing to reflect upon but images and events of joy and gladness, and honest endeavours to be wise and good. It may be satisfactory to know that about one year after Jessie was married, my sister Mary was united to Mr. Benjamin Dingle, a second marriage whose happiness cancelled the bitterness of her first, and made Benjamin's last days joyous and full of peace. She had two children by her first husband which were handsomely provided for by their

step-father, and three by her second who inherited the chief part of his property. He made the Grange a perfect *bijou*, the admiration of all who visited him. He opened his heart, for it was large enough to do so without effort, to the gentle, delicate, and sweet-tempered Amy Rushworth, who removed from the Vicarage to his house with my sister; but, three months after, the amiable Joseph Jepson found the Vicarage insupportable without her society, and so by the help of his old friend Jerome Givington and others, he took her to his bosom for life, for "better or worse," and the end proved like the beginning of his affection sincere and full of happiness.

In a few months after that event the old Red Lion of Timberton and fifty acres of land were to be let, and Sarah Jarvis and her husband removed from the Tawny Lion of Timbuctoo, Plymouth, to occupy the advantageous holding, and live in hopes of again seeing the gallant son of Chrysacoma Willifer.

The farm of which the Dark Dingle near the Slinket Wilderness is a part, was let to Seth and Samuel, who became well-to-do farmers and horse-dealers, and their mother, Ebna Ebonal, lived there and at the Mansion just as she pleased without let or hindrance, and a fine host of the gipsy tribe were allowed at any time to squat about the common and green lanes, and bye-places of Timberton and Edgecombe.

Jonathan Dutch and Eliza his wife became staid, well-to-do, and prosperous shop-keepers. The old and faithful servant Ruth, as Ebna Ebonal foretold, married the cross-eyed carpenter and had twins, and by the handsome portion given her by Mrs. Jessie Neville he became a topping tradesman.

My mother and Mrs. Dame Wilson Dingle having been united for over twenty years by the bonds of pure friendship, founded upon mutual sympathies and tastes, decided that they would be more closely united to the end of

their days. For this purpose, the Dame went to reside with my mother at the Angle House, and our visits were about equally numbered, from the Mansion to the Angle House, and *vice versa* ; until the slow, but sure footsteps of time, made it the duty of the younger Nevilles to visit the aged.

The good-hearted Baronet lived to a good old age, and finished, with some aid from his son-in-law, the history of his ancestors, often making strange wagers with one, who was, for the most part, able to check-mate him on his own "quarter deck." It was a matter of constant rejoicing to him, that Jessie Wilson only laughed at the overtures made to her, at the suggestions of the Captain.

Mr. Willifer Elliott gained honourable distinction in the Indian wars, and returned home to the joy of his father, who settled forthwith upon him a large estate in Wales, and all his property in the funds, which gave him ample means as a gentleman ; and at the

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next election he was returned a Member of Parliament for a respectable borough in the liberal interest.

The most friendly relationship subsisted between us until his death, which carried him off prematurely by typhus fever and bad nursing, while on a visit to the south of France.

In my youth I firmly resolved to labour hard to live, which ended, after a brief but hard struggle, in resolving to live to labour for the good of my fellow-beings, and the production of certain works, which are now, like my life, near completion.

To leave nothing relating to the personages of this narrative uncertain, suffice it to say that my bonnie Jessie invited Nora Whitehead to pay a visit to the Mansion. She came and tarried three months. The sociable was ordered to take her to meet the London coach, but instead of returning, she eloped with a young wealthy farmer of Edgecombe, who had become enamoured with



her dark rolling eyes and roseate cheeks. Her father and mother soon forgave her neglect of filial duty—so did his also, for he was their only child, and she was a very respectable young lady.

Here it was my intention to conclude this narrative, but the charming Jessie—the wife of my bosom, the mother of my two daughters and three sons—who has, from day to day, page after page, read what I have written, freely and wisely commenting thereon, twitched my ear and said—

“Thank you, Mr. Harry Neville, for your full, true, and particular account of my most curious piece of antique art, which now adorns the hall-door of the Angle House.”

“By the body and breeches of Sir Leo Elliott, Baronet, Captain of the Royal Navy, deceased, I thank you, my sweet one, for your hint, for it would be unpardonable to send this narrative into the wide world without a description of that work—that elaborate work of antique art.”

This said antique knocker, which has made the Angle House perfect in all its parts and symbols, is a work chased in bronze, but in what age executed, or by whom, is altogether conjecture. It has undoubtedly a distinct and symbolical character, and refers to the ancient faith of Solar-fire worship, and Æther-Spirit theology, for all and each of the parts embody symbols, which have reference to those pure and divine forms of human belief.

All the various emblems and symbols which are scattered in rude sculpture about the Angle House walls, are combined into one perfectly symbolical whole, so that it was by no means clear that the Angle House itself, was not built for the knocker. A full and particular account of this work of Antique Art is not so easily given, for it was fashioned to symbolize the state of the solar system and the stellar heavens at the period to which the symbols refer. The perfect symbol of the Infinite

Intelligence invented by Hermes Trismegistus, the Taausic cross forming the centre, round and about which underlying and overlapping were arranged all the solar and Æther-fire, theological symbols and emblems, crescents, discs, angles, squares, balls, and lines; the moveable part of the knocker being a symbolic serpent, so formed as to be at once a symbol of Consecration and Eternity. The Zodiacal signs and the precession of the Equinoxes were all delineated, and by a curious contrivance of art and science combined, formed a sundial; perforations through the elevated bars, which form the meridian, allowing the sun light to pass through and mark the hours of the day. At the top there is the Egyptian winged globe; at the bottom a sphinx. In the centre of the circle made by the serpent there is a mundane egg, which revolves on its axis on which the equinoctial line and the line of the ecliptic are given. The superficial measure of the bronze is three hundred and twenty-four inches; its

weight twenty one pounds. The circumstances under which it came to light and being placed on the centre of the front door of the Angle House added considerably to its notoriety, but independent of all other things it has in itself sufficient to command the attention of all persons who have the least claim to education and taste, and to secure the profoundest investigation of men of Science, Theology, and Philosophy. It is now called the Solar Symbol of Timberton.

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